

NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**THE ROLE OF THE G.A.A. IN CREATING,
MAINTAINING AND REINFORCING SENSES OF
PLACE AND IDENTITY**

by

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**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements of the M.A. (Geographical Analysis),
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2001

Abstract

What we have here is a tentative attempt to investigate the role the G.A.A. plays in creating, reinforcing and maintaining senses of place in Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary. The G.A.A. itself is an organisation of over one million members, its strength comes from the two opposite notions of rivalry and comradery. It is this rivalry that is the core of identity and sense of place in areas where hurling and the G.A.A. are strong. The study indicates that hurling and the hurling club reinforces the boundaries geographers place around places, creating an inside and an outside - a "them" and "us". Senses of place if anything are stronger for players involved now than for those of the past in these times of time-space compression, the links with home are strengthening. Even the space in which games are played takes on a symbolic importance as a focal point for the community. Contrast this to the urban clubs, where no parish rule exists and essentially no sense of place. Thus the role the local G.A.A. club plays in creating, maintaining and reinforcing senses of place becomes more obvious.

Foreword

My name is John Keane. Keane is not a name prevalent in Borrisoleigh, where I live. My father is a Kilkenny man - a blowin. I am heavily involved in the G.A.A. club in Borrisoleigh and as such have an inside track on the role the G.A.A. plays in the community. Far from a disadvantage to research I think being from Borrisoleigh was invaluable while undertaking this project, it is in fact this inside knowledge that gave me the idea for this project.

Acknowledgements

There are many, many people worthy of thanks, my mother Mary - a pillar of support, my father John - a great man to have behind you no matter what endeavour is being undertaken, and my brothers Kevin and Ciaran who have also been of great support. Paddy Duffy, a gentleman and a scholar who provided direction when needed. My classmates, (especially Conor (Danky), Breata, Eilis and John Paul) for the Friday nights, the pints and the help with overcoming my fear of computers. The people of Borrisoleigh who allowed themselves to be interviewed and annoyed by me and finally but most importantly Helen, without whom I wouldn't have completed anything in my four years in Maynooth.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Origins 1997:

The origins of this project date back to 1997. It was an important year for two reasons. In September, Tipperary played near neighbours Clare in the first “backdoor All-Ireland”. Rivalry and emotion the like of which I had never seen had been born. Never before had G.A.A. rivalry been so bitter, never before had people’s love of place and sense of identity been so obvious, never before had the bridge separating Ballina (Tipperary) and Killaloe (Clare) assumed such strategic importance.

In October, I found myself away from home for the first time. Plucked from the comfortable laid-back and rural village of Borrisoleigh, I travelled to Maynooth to continue my education. The long trip home on a Tuesday evening to training was a small price to pay for a link with home. It was on the train home that I met my first friend in Maynooth, a fellow G.A.A. player Dermot Brislane. Dermot too was making the long trip home to train with rival Tipperary club Toomevara. Gone were the strong words of on-pitch meetings of the past, a cultural organisation had formed an intangible bond through both of our loves for our respective home places.

The aim of this project is to examine the role cultural organisations play in creating a sense of place and identity. There are four main objectives, which have expanded as the project has progressed and they are:

- a) Examine the perceptions of present players in the Borrisoleigh G.A.A. club as regards place and the importance which these players attach to place and the role the G.A.A. plays in this context,
- b) Examine the perceptions of past players to see if any temporal changes have occurred in the opinions of players,
- c) Examine the opinions of individuals from other cultural organisations to see if differences exist in ideas of place and identity,
- d) To examine the “outsiders” view of place and their perceptions of identity and the role the G.A.A. plays in this context.

Chapter two will discuss the theories used in the project centring mainly on MacClancy's Sport and Identity, Relph's Place and Placelessness and Bale's sports geography. My theoretical approach will also be described in this section. Chapter three contains the various methodologies used in the collection and processing of the data. This will basically centre on the interview techniques that were used and the management packages employed for discourse analysis. Chapter four will be divided into various subsections detailing the interpretation of the data. Chapter five contains conclusions reached from the interpretation of the data and points worthy of further study. The remainder of the first chapter contains a brief but necessary history of the G.A.A., an introduction to the study area Borrisoleigh and its G.A.A. history and a discussion on the importance of the parish.

1.2 The GAELIC ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION – A Brief History:

Any discussions on the history of Gaelic games are fraught with danger as historical views conflict as to their origins in Irish mythology. Many traditionalists would argue that the origins of the games stretch back into the depths of time. Marcus De Burca suggests that hurling can be traced in legend to the battle of Moytura fought about 2000 BC between two rural races and was preceded by a force hurling match between two

teams of 27 aside drawn from opposing forces, the casualties were buried under a huge cairn. References to hurling exist in Ireland's oldest legal system, the Brehon Laws. Purseail (1982, p.19) refers to the Senchus Mor, an eighth century text of these ancient laws and the regulation concerning the binding of hurling sticks used by princes and chieftains.

“Satin and scarlet for the son of the King of Erin, and silver on his scabbards, and brass rings on his hurling sticks. Tin upon the scabbards of chieftains of lower rank and brass rings upon their hurling sticks.”

I should point out at this stage that I am not a historian or eulogist of Gaelic games, the examples above are attempts to point to the origins of the games in legend. Perhaps Mike Cronin (1996, p. 72) puts it best;

“Whether located in the ancient battles of Moytura, or found in the annual fairy battle of Munster, the roots of Gaelic games have always exerted a fascination for those who follow the games”. Indeed Cronin goes on to point interestingly to the inadequacies of past “traditionalists” in the historical tracings of the games. For example, Cronin disputes the clear lineage ascribed to the games from Cu Chulainn to the present day by Marcus De Burca and a host of others. The fragments of historical reference that exist are used by De Burca and a host of others to trace a history of hurling that begins with mention of the Brehon laws, leaps forward to the legends of Cu Chulainn and onward to St. Colmcilles dealings with a hurley in the fifth century. From this the story leaps forward to the Statutes of Kilkenny in 1367 and the Statutes of Galway 1527, both clear attempts to ban hurling. From here De Burca's history of hurling leaps to the eighteenth century where he argues according to Cronin that hurling was in a healthy state and

widespread across the country because of numerous mentions of the games that can be found in the records of that period. The case for a linear history of gaelic football is even less convincing. Across Europe the pre-nineteenth century had many references to different people's playing games that involved kicking or carrying a ball. It can be argued (and is by Mike Cronin) that Gaelic footballs origins lie in the Irish version of "folk football" and thus (dare I say it) may have similar origins to soccer. The word tradition has been repeated in almost every interview I have conducted. The importance of this word in the context of the research cannot be underestimated but it is vital that one understands that this tradition only came about after the games were codified in 1884.

It is pertinent, though not vitally important for this project to mention the political and cultural climate. The 1880's "were a high point in the organisation of Irish nationalist politics and culture". The link with Britain needed to be severed and a national sports organisation may have provided nationalist leaders with a footing on which to engender wider popular support than had been possible in the past. Whether or not this was the case is an argument into which I do not wish to delve. The following points can be taken to be relatively certain:

- a) The association was founded against a backdrop of nationalistic fervour,
- b) It formed a major part of Ireland's cultural revival,
- c) An indelible link between the G.A.A. and the church was formed at the outset.

The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded on November 1st 1884 in Hayes Hotel, Thurles. The men present at the meeting forming the association were originally numbered at seven (Michael Cusack, Maurice Davin, P.J. O'Ryan, John Mc Kay, James K. Bracken, John Wyse Power and Thomas Mc Carthy). Once again the history here is

argued as many G.A.A. historians place others at the meeting. In naming the original seven the purpose is merely to show that the G.A.A. placed itself "firmly alongside the major manifestations of political nationalism in Ireland at that time". Allied to this the patronage of Archbishop Croke and his view that the G.A.A. would arrest the "penetration of English Culture" (Cronin, p. 83) and the whole fervent nationalistic outlook is obvious. However as stated earlier these are arguments in which I do not wish to engage. The indelible link between the church and the G.A.A. has a more subtle connection with this project. The involvement of the church meant that teams would eventually be organised on a parish basis with rivalry thus in-built.

1.3 The Importance of Parish: Whelan's Chinese Boxes:

"When the G.A.A. first ordered itself, almost by accident it stumbled on the key to its own success. Every player represents his own place, his school, club, county" (Humphries, 1996). Kevin Whelan in his discussion on the bases of regionalism (Culture in Ireland-Regions Identity and Power) provides an interesting analogy as regards the most appropriate way of visualising Irish regionalism as a hierarchy akin to a set of Chinese boxes, each describing a series of allegiances, affiliation and attachments.

The first level in the territorial structure is the family farm. Keeping ones name on the land is of paramount importance and has been affected by recent externalities. In the big farm regions of South Leinster and East Munster this aim has been achieved due to the benefits received from the E.C. However, the well documented struggle for small farmers of the Atlantic fringe and drumlin belt has seen this tier erode in present times.

The second level in this structure is the neighbourhood level or towns land. Whelan uses Kavanagh's *Epic* to allude to the importance of towns land as a place from which to look out at the world from. You are identified by family and towns land, "He's one of the Ryans of Coolataggle". How this tier manifests itself in the village setting is difficult to know but as the study later shows identity can be reduced to estate or street in that village.

The third of Whelan's Chinese boxes is what Whelan loosely terms "the local community zone" (p. 7). In rural Ireland this manifests itself as the Catholic parish and it has retained a well-developed sense of attachment. The G.A.A. according to Whelan is the most notable example of successful use of the parish system as a framework for local identity. The organisation has built its foundation on the local loyalties.

Above the parochial framework is the county system. The Irish county system has its origins in the English shiring system initiated in the medieval period and completed with the shiring of Wicklow. The county retained vitality in terms of administration from then on. However, Whelan recognises the importance the G.A.A. plays in forming county allegiances in the popular consciousness. This occurred "only after the G.A.A. adopted it as the principal basis for national competition" (p. 11). County consciousness followed which is evident in great county anthems (Boo-lavogue, The Galway Shawl, Slievenamon) and the naming official (The Premier County, The Marble County) and unofficial e.g. The Wexford Yellow-bellies etc.

Over the county framework fits the province. Whelan however, feels that the province is virtually obsolete with its main uses evident in sport. The G.A.A. still uses it as its competition division. The merits of such a system are much debated but what is obvious from Whelan's description of the bases of regionalism are their indelible links with the G.A.A. Family, towns land (street or estate), parish, county, province are all the bases of regionalism and, it could be argued, identity.

The G.A.A. plays a major role here, players represent their family, towns land and parish primarily, the second tier of identity is with their county, after which comes province.

This project will be concerned with the primary tier of identity that of family towns land and parish and the role the G.A.A. plays in defining and reinforcing these senses of place and identity.

1.4 The Study Area:

The study area was Borrisoleigh, Co. Tipperary (although some interviews were carried out in Templeogue to assess the urban/rural differences). This parish is bordered by four other parishes i.e. Templederry, Drom-Inch, Toomevara and Upperchurch. A village of moderate size it can be described as a node for surrounding parishes. With large business like Kellys of Fantane, Tipperary Spring Water and a secondary school with over 500 pupils, Borrisoleigh is a meeting place for people from different parishes, thus rivalries are very evident. Of late new housing developments e.g. Mountgeorge, Knockanevin have resulted in many people from other areas migrating into Borrisoleigh.

1.5 G.A.A. in Borrisoleigh - A Brief History:

On Easter Sunday 1886, a tournament was organised in two fields on the Turtulla Road Thurles. It was following this tournament that the Borrisoleigh Club was formed. No record of the actual founders of the club has survived but it is generally felt that Rev. Michael Finn P.P. was elected its first chairman with Phil Harty, Phil Kennedy and Mick Keating Borrisoleigh, Michael O'Brien and Pat Guilmartin, Ileigh also involved in the setting up of the club. The first county championships were played in 1887 in which Borrisoleigh took part. Indeed the final was played in Borrisoleigh, (this was perhaps the beginning of the "tradition" to which many interviewees allude to later).

The parish itself was split into two clubs on and off since its inception namely Borrisoleigh and Ileigh. Ironically the Borris team was made up of players from surrounding areas of the parish while Ileigh was mostly made up of players actually resident in the village of Borrisoleigh itself. This division was bitter at times but was corrected in 1948, when parish curate Rev. John C. Ryan mediated in delicate negotiations to form the present day club Borris-Ileigh (A Century of G.A.A. in Borris-Ileigh). It was after this that the club gained most notoriety winning county finals in 1949, 1950, 1953, 1981, 1983, 1986 and culminating in Munster and All-Ireland Club Championship in 1986/87. Thus it is obvious that the club has a long tradition in the G.A.A. in Tipperary from its inception to the present day.



Plate 1.1

Source: 'A Century of G.A.A. in Borris-Ileigh', p. 14.

Parochial map of County Tipperary



Fig. 1.1
 Source: 'Tipperary's G.A.A. Ballads – A Millennium Production'.

CHAPTER TWO

Concepts/ Literature Review

“To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places: to be human is to have and know your place” (Relph, 1976, p. 1). This basic concept is fundamental to any discussion of place and a sense thereof. Relph approaches the concept of place itself from a unique phenomenological perspective. For Relph the investigation of place needs to be undertaken as a study of the lived world of everyday experiences, thus as Peet declares, the positivist assumptions that humans are predictable rational and behave in a measurable manner facilitating the development of models and theories of mans behaviour runs contrary to the “real” lived world explanations offered by phenomenologists.

2.1 Place and Placelessness:

In this highly original work Relph introduces many ideas central to the investigation of place and identity. Relph discusses various levels of the experience of being inside or outside places. These are fundamental when looking at the role the G.A.A. plays in the making and maintaining of identities. Indeed Relph engages with many of the issues fundamental to this project. To understand the role the G.A.A. plays in senses of place is to realise that a strong relationship exists between community and place in which as Peet says, “each reinforces the identity of the other”. In other words “people are their place and a place its people” (Relph, 1976, p. 34). Relph suggests that differentiation between

these two ideas in conceptual terms may be easy but in experience they are not easily separated.

Relph speaks vehemently on the subject of rootedness and care for place, "In both our communal and our personal experience of places there is often a close attachment, a familiarity that is part of knowing and being known here, in this particular place" (Relph, 1976, p. 57.). This attachment to a particular place gives us our roots in places. Location and local culture according to Duffy (1998, p. 25) are inherently redolent of the geography of place. Relph seems to echo this. To have roots in a place is to have a secure place from which to view a world and think of ones own position in the scheme of things. In the words of Seamus Heaney "the nourishment which springs from knowing and belonging to a certain place" (cited in Duffy 2000, p. 88.) is utterly part of human nature. The G.A.A. and its parochial base, plays a major role in this sense of place and rootedness.

Relph describes home-places (or places to which we are rooted) as profound centres of human existence. Home is not just the house you happen to live in, it is not something that can be anywhere. Associations interactions and attachments are not interchangeable or transferable, they are deeply personal, the need to know and be known can never be under stated. Relph sums up the essence of place very succinctly when quoting Gabriel Matiel (cited in Matore, 1996) "An individual is not distinct from his place, he is that place". Deep associations exist for individuals with home places, these associations are created by interactions occurring in daily life. These associations are sources not only of

identity on an individual level but of cultural identity providing us with “a point of departure from which we orient ourselves in the world. These notions of place attachment described above may seem intangible and vague but their meanings and contexts will become clear when the data is analysed in Chapter 4.

Particularly pertinent to this study is Relph's discussions of the various levels of being inside and outside places.

- a) Existential outsidership in which places assume the same meaningless identity.
- b) Objective outsidership which according to Relph has long been the base of the academic geographer where thought and feeling is ignored in order to scientifically explain the spatial organisation of places.
- c) Incidental outsidership where places are used simply as backgrounds for activities. Here Relph uses examples of business men attending conferences in different cities with these cities simply providing a place for conferences to occur pushing the place to the background.
- d) Vicarious insidership: where places are experienced in a second hand way through pictures paintings poetry etc.
- e) Behavioural insidership involves being in a place and seeing that place as a set of views, objects and activities arranged in certain ways and having certain tangible qualities. Here Relph concerns himself primarily with deliberate attempts to attend to the appearance of place – the visual context being paramount. However, conforming to the views and activities in a cultural sense are of more importance in the context of this project. As we will see later in chapter 4 the G.A.A. has a major role to play in the cultural view of place and participation in the G.A.A. may define your “insidership”.
- f) Empathetic insidership – the boundary between behavioural and empathetic is hazy. Relph describes the difference as “a fading from the concern with the qualities of appearance to emotional and empathetic involvement in the place, “empathetic insidership demands a willingness to be open to significance of a place, to feel it, to know and respect its symbols”. Appreciating the elements of the places identity means the insider completely understands and is subsumed into the personality of the area.
- g) Existential insidership – this occurs when the individual knows that this place is where you belong. You know the place, its people are known, “Existential insidership characterises belonging to a place and the deep and complete identity with a place that is the very foundation of the place concept”. This implicit knowledge that this place is where you belong means that we are aware of our existential outsidership in other areas no matter how open we are to their symbols and significances. The

G.A.A. as will be seen in chapter 4 is fundamental in creating and maintaining existential insideness while providing a key for those to enter from the outside.

2.2 Places: Authentic/ Inauthentic

Central to Relphs discourse on place-making and placelessness are the notions of authenticity and inauthenticity. Although Relphs pre-occupation here is the manifestation of authenticity and inauthenticity in the landscape, these phenomenological notions also describe less tangible cultural meanings of place. The phenomenological notion of authenticity is “that which is genuine, unadulterated, without hypocrisy, and honest to itself, not just in terms of superficial characteristics but of depth” (Relph, 1976, p. 64.). An authentic sense of place comes “from profound and unselfconscious identity of place” (Relph, 1976, p. 64.). Thus it becomes clear that the authentic sense of place involves being inside and attached to a place (home town, village, county) and being aware of this unselfconsciously. In other words I’m from Borrisoleigh and know that without reflection.

For Relph inauthenticity basically refers to no sense of place. Inauthentic places are subsumed in notions of homogeneity detachment and the eradication of identities. Relph again reiterates the frailties of the philosophical approaches of positivism in this regard, “the technical approaches of much physical and social planning is clearly inauthentic because of its very detachments and narrowness”.

Inauthentic attitudes then are bred through various media e.g. mass culture, mass communication etc. with the net result being “placelessness”. Although primarily Relph

is concerned with the monotonous flatscape he does acknowledge the significance of placelessness in the cultural and individual context.

Anne Buttimer, a prominent phenomenologist takes up Relph's argument (cited in Peet 1998). For Buttimer people's sense of personal and cultural identity is intimately bound up with place identity. The key point made by Buttimer relates to centeredness – a person's sense of place is defined by how well it provides a centre for one's life interests. This notion of centering is in stark contrast to centralisation of power etc. For Buttimer, this contrast may symbolise the differences between the insider and outsider's view of place. The G.A.A. as will be seen in chapter four also provides a means of straddling the divide between insiderness and outsiderness. Central also to Buttimer's thinking is the use of our own (mine) experiences and use this to test disciplinary models and hypothesis. This notion of the researcher using his own experience is particularly pertinent for this project as I have an intimate knowledge both of the G.A.A. and of Borrisoleigh. The challenge then in research like this is to “call into conscious awareness taken for granted ideas and practices within one's personal world” (Peet, 1996, p. 56.). The “insider's trap” lies in such a deep immersion in place that one has difficulty extracting oneself objectively seeing home in wider social, cultural and spatial contexts. Thus I am at the advantage of having intimate knowledge of my home place but the need to be objective is also paramount.

2.3 A Progressive Sense of Place?

Doreen Massey's 'A Global Sense of Place' (1991) article offers a somewhat different discussion on sense of place in this era of rapid “time-space compression”. Massey

questions the reactionary responses to this phenomenon such as sentimentalised recovering of sanitised heritages and antagonism towards newcomers and outsiders. Is this necessary however? Can, Massey asks, a sense of place be progressive, “not self enclosing defence but outward looking”. Through the article Massey alludes to the destructive roles played by time space compression causing social marginalisation, “the time spaced compression of some groups can undermine the power of others”. The hubbub created by this phenomenon has lead to feelings of unsettlement and vulnerability. Local communities it is argued are increasingly fragmented making “real” places a thing of a glorified past. Couple this with what Massey describes with the “power geometry” of time space compression – different groups, different individuals are placed in different (but distinct) ways in relation to the flows and interconnections associated with time space compression- and it is difficult to imagine a sense of that is not reactionary. What is needed then to hold on to that notion of geographical difference, uniqueness and rootedness without being reactionary.

There are a number of ways according to which the reactionary notion of place is problematical. The most obvious here is that places have single identities. The second is that sense of place is constructed out of introverted inward looking history “delving into the past for internalised origins” (Massey, 1991, p. 321.). The problem this creates is very geographical in nature, requiring the drawing of boundaries. These boundaries are in fact central to this and will be discussed in depth in chapter four. What is apparent here is inherent in the G.A.A. is the idea of boundaries defining places. Yes, quite possibly there may be little social difference between say a blocklayer who works in

Nenagh and hurls for Toomevara and a blocklayer from Borrisoleigh working in the same building site and hurling for Borrisoleigh, but the bounds of both parishes are of utmost importance to both men. The question why will be answered later but what is certain is that the G.A.A. has an important role to play here in reinforcing that boundary and giving it concrete meaning.

Massey uses the example of Kilburn High Road as a place of many identities while unquestionably the mix of cultures gives Kilburn its own very distinctive character it “is absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares”. Thus an introverted historical origin of the sense of place is impossible here. For Massey it is impossible to think about Kilburn without bringing into play half the world and British imperial history also.

There are a number of ways then according to Massey in which a progressive concept of place may be envisaged. Firstly, place as a concept is not static. If places are conceptualised through social interactions then it should be realised that these interactions are not motionless, they are processes, processes of interaction. Secondly, places do not have boundaries, which form simple enclosed spaces, which are not vulnerable to penetration from the outsider. It is this association between vulnerability and penetration, which makes invasion by newcomers threatening. Third, places do not have single unique identities. They are full of internal rivalries and conflicts. As will become clear in chapter four, the G.A.A. unwittingly reinforce into parish rivalries. Fourth, and finally, Massey argues that none of this denies place nor the importance of

uniqueness of place. What Massey argues is that the specificity of place is constantly reproduced through the process of globalisation. Homogenisation does not occur, a distinct mixture of social relations is created. The interaction of these relations and create further element of uniqueness and thus the process is ongoing.

2.4 Sport and Geography:

When one thinks of sport and any scholarly investigation one thing is immediately apparent and is perhaps put best by Harry Edwards (p. 5):

"analytical investigation of sport has not kept pace with its increasing significance as an important factor in modern life".

One does not have to be a scholar to realise the sheer volume of print sport occupies in daily newspapers. Sociologists are the leaders in the analytical investigation but have in the main concerned themselves with the function of sports in social organisation. Sports have always been a vehicle for people to collectively identify with an area. Sports of the modern day are of major economic significance also, it is an integral part of the third largest industry on the globe, leisure and tourism is only outranked on the monetary scales by oil and cars (Mac Clancy, 1996). There are many reasons why sport until fairly recently has been neglected as a fruitful object of study. One, according to feminist sociologist of sport Jennifer Hargreaves (cited in Mac Clancy, 1996), is partly due to the fact that mainstream ideas about sports are concerned with the physical body, which is viewed as natural and unchangeable, hence it was thought there was nothing deserving of analysis. A further reason for this neglect was the influence of popular belief that sports

have a life of their own, one which is separate from the 'important' aspects of the social world such as work politics and economics.

Thinking geographically it is easy for a sportsman like myself to see where the academic discipline and sport overlap. There are according to John Bale, (a leading sports geographer) two concepts which are central to both sport and geography i.e. space and place. There are other philosophical similarities (e.g. the difficulties in defining either sport or geography) but space and place are common entities in the two.

2.5 Place attachment and Sport:

"Apart from war, sport is one of the few things that binds people to place through ascription" (Bale, 1989, p. 14.). Here Bale refers to the role spectator sports play in bringing segmental units (parishes, counties) into clear-cut confrontations that occur much less frequently in other areas of life. Bale here is speaking of the role international sports events perform in uniting nations or on a smaller scale events like premier league soccer matches unite cities. At the intra-urban level of scale, the catchment area of supporters may be associated with certain cultural variables. Bale uses a well-known example here to illustrate this point i.e. the divide between protestant and catholic religions in soccer terms in Belfast, loyalties are divided between Linfield (Protestant) and Glasgow Celtic (Catholic). The same thing is evident at the regional scale. Bale uses the example of Pelota in Northern Spain and Southwest France, the geographical distribution of the sport serves to reinforce the Basque culture as a visible feature of the landscape. Just how this thinking is reflected in the G.A.A. is not immediately apparent.



The playing of the games is an expression of nationality due to the exclusive nature of member make-up, but with this exclusivity also comes to a large extent cultural homogeneity. By this I mean that it is not difficult to assume that G.A.A. players and the large majority of supporters come from the same religion and similar cultural (nationalist) backgrounds. As stated before the G.A.A. works on the three most basic bases of regionalism and identity, family, townland (street, estate), and parish. The big question here is what drives these rivalries in places where people are (in loose terms) so similar? Is it the need to be known and know an area? (Ralph), is it the need for us to have a safe place from which to look out at the world? (Massey), or have these senses of place been handed down from the past? (Whelan). In chapter four I hope to answer these questions to some extent.

2.6 Sport and Identity:

Sports, help to define moral and political community. They are vehicles of identity, providing people with a sense of difference and a way of classifying themselves and others, whether latitudinally or hierarchically" (Mac Clancy, 1996, p. 2.). Sports may not just be a marker of ones already established social identity but as can be seen in chapter four sport is often a means by which individuals create new identities for themselves. Mac Clancy gives the example of the industrialised urban societies that emerged in Britain during the last century where spectatorship at team sports became an important means for the male offspring of rural emigrants from different areas to forge a communal identity. A similar situation exists in the context of the G.A.A., an "outsider" can come "inside" the community if he shows interest in hurling (see Chapter four). Mac Clancy

makes an excellent point on the function of sport and one, which is central to this project. Sport does not *merely* reveal underlying social values it is a mode of expressing these values. Sport is not a reflection of perceived notions of society, it is a part of society which may be used as a way of *reflecting on* society. This will become clearer when the data is analysed in chapter four.

Respondents of different sports commonly try to boost their popularity by landing them as instruments of social harmony, a means of self-expression etc. Sports do however according to Mac Clancy, fulfil a number of functions which are particularly pertinent for this project: to define more sharply boundaries of communities, to assist in the creation of new social identities, to give physical expression to certain social values and to act as a means of reflecting on those values: to serve as potentially contested space by opposed groups. In short sports are more than just games.

2.7 Sport Space as a Symbol:

Bale here concerns himself mainly with the rigorously enforced spatial parameters which characterises sport as opposed to spatial parameters which characterises sport as opposed to recreation and leisure – sports require carefully defined spatial limits. However, sport space can also be symbolic, a focal point for an area. Nostalgic imagery may be drawn from sports, for example, cricket has been said to serve as a metaphor for the ideal society a mythical “Merrie England”. In the Irish case the townland fields which are referred to in the study may symbolise nostalgic visions of time past – the simplicity of

society as hurling was the main recreation, the women also gathered here – an idyllic time when people danced at crossroads.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction:

What should be apparent at this stage, having read the concepts/literature review chapter is that basically no research has been done in the field of geography and the G.A.A. By design I have kept away from most academic discourse on the G.A.A. because of its pre-occupation with nationalism, a concept I don't wish to engage with in this project.

Indeed finding any material which is not a nostalgic history or a eulogy of past "greats" (Mike Cronin being the notable exception) proved difficult.

From the outset it was apparent that the simplest way of finding out about localism, rivalries, traditions etc. and the role of the G.A.A. plays in fostering a sense of place was to ask the people directly involved – the players past and present. Major difficulty was encountered at this juncture. As my study area was Borrisoleigh (my home town) and the interviewees were all involved in the G.A.A., my team-mates and mentors, many problems became apparent at the trial interview stage. The most persistent of these problems was extricating myself from the tight knit atmosphere of the G.A.A. club and presenting myself as an objective researcher. Thus, to prevent interviews descending into descriptions of past games and the possibility of Borrisoleigh winning a county final this year, serious thought went into what interview approach to use to probe the geographical aims and objectives stated in chapter one.

The original approach used in the trial interviews was the “informal conversational interview” (Kitchin, 2000). The minimum of direction was provided by the interviewer in the hope that respondents could relate their opinions, thus challenging the preconceptions of the interviewer. Great skill in interviewing here would be needed but I found myself unable to keep the conversation flowing adequately in the direction of the topics I was concerned with. An interview guide approach was then undertaken. Here topics to be covered were decided in advance while the phrasing of questions varied from one interview to the next. This permitted the interviewer to introduce the main topics and probe the interviewees’ responses without the interviews “taking off on wild tangents” (Kitchin, 2000). The topics to be covered can be summarised as follows:

- 1) The reasons respondents play hurling.
- 2) For respondents living away from Borrisoleigh – does hurling for Borris reinforce their identity away from home.
- 3) Investigate respondents’ thoughts on rivalries/senses of identity within the parish.
- 4) Investigate whether respondents feel that being part of the club reinforces their sense of belonging to a community.
- 5) Probe the idea of inter-parish rivalries and the role respondents feel that these rivalries play in reinforcing their sense of place i.e. is this sense of place highly contested (bitter)?
- 6) The importance of the G.A.A. as a means for the “outsider” to come “inside” the community.
- 7) Is the sense of place now as strong as that felt by players of the past.
- 8) Does the G.A.A. make people more aware of the physical boundaries between parishes?
- 9) Investigate the importance of the field itself as a local point of Borrisoleigh.

These topics were the rough guidelines set down by the interview. However as interviews progressed other points of significance were probed (this will be discussed in chapter four). It should be noted at this stage that not all the interviewees were involved directly in the G.A.A. in Borrisoleigh. I.C.A. members were also interviewed to gain

insights into another cultural vignette. G.A.A. players from a peri-urban club in Dublin were also interviewed as were people involved with the Borrisoleigh camogie club.

The interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis – no group interviews were needed. The majority of the interviews were recorded using a tape recorder, however, some of the interviewees showed aversion for this method and in such cases notes were taken.

The interviews were conducted in late May and early June 2001. Interviews were conducted with present players living in Borrisoleigh and present players living at home. Past players of 30-40 years ago were also interviewed along with the other groups mentioned above. The advantage of using interviews in qualitative research is that the project then assumes multiple voices – any research project should have three voices, that of past researchers (contained in literature review), that of the respondents (the study) and that of the researcher himself (the conclusion).

3.2 Analysing the Data:

The free style of the interviewer guide approach made analysing the interview data difficult and at times tiresome. The questions posed to interviewees varied from interview to interview making the responses difficult to compare. However using the data management package NUD-IST (Non Numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching Theorising) allows users to:

- Manage, explore and search texts of documents,
- Manage and explore ideas about the data,
- Link ideas and construct theories about the data,
- Test theories about the data,

- Generate reports including statistical summaries (Kitchin, 2000).

Prior to using NUD-IST the data was transcribed and saved as a text file using Microsoft Word. Using NUD-IST a tree was constructed containing nine main topics described above. These index categories were arranged hierarchically and the master category of the hierarchy of index categories was called the ROOT from which all other index categories branch. This facilitated the arrangement of the data into appropriate categories with some data appearing in more than category where relevant.

Using the Mate Report application within the Node Explorer particular tree's categories would be highlighted to ascertain the frequency with which certain answers appeared in the interviews. Using this method "the data can speak for itself" (Kitchin, 2000) and common opinions and beliefs of the interviewees can be identified.

CHAPTER 4

The Study

4.1 Why do you play hurling?

Before going into the main reasons why respondents play hurling, I think it is necessary to explain the merit of asking this question. In discussion with my supervisor it was felt that use of this question was in doubt. However, it was decided that the question would be asked in the trial interview. From here it was obvious that the expected answer, “because I like the game and enjoy playing it”, was not going to be the response. In fact this simple question provided data which is central to the main thrust of this research project.

One thing was central to all of the respondents answers to this question, all respondents fathers had a major role to play in respondents taking up the game. This was common to players both of today and the past. Take for example respondent seven, a player of the past.

Int: “Tell me Tim the main reason why you hurl?”

Resp 7: “Well now John – My father as simple as that. My very earliest memories would be of him teaching me to hit a ball out in the yard.”

This trend is also prevalent in the players of the present.

Int: “Kevin tell me why you hurl?”

Resp 6: “I’ve always played it... ..My father is also big into hurling and all my brothers play.”

The patriarchal element is common to all interviews but major differences exist from here. Players of the past speak of the lack of distractions.

Resp 4: "When I was a young boy we had no money and there wasn't a whole pile to do except hurl. Indeed several fields were dotted around the parish and these were nodes of social activity."

Resp 7: "The bridge field was a great place for people to pass the time eh, hurling".

These thoughts of hurling as the main social distraction and an activity pursued because of few recreational opportunities is in stark contrast to the reasons given by present generation players. Words like tradition, representation and pride are used.

Resp 6: "its great to represent Borris, we're a club with a big tradition".

Thus it becomes apparent that for the present generation an indelible link exists between playing hurling and having an identity, having a sense of place. From the outset using this question, the bases of regionalism alluded to by Whelan seem also to define the hurlers identity. This does not change temporally as past and present seem to organise their identity hierarchically through hurling from family to towns land (or estate) to village and then county.

Resp 5, a present player said: "I'd be very proud of the Pallas Cross tradition, because my father and two uncles played for Borris and my father won junior medals for Borris in hurling. It's a great thing to have passed on to you and they would all encourage you around Pallas Cross, it's a great hurling area".

Rivalries in G.A.A. terms are mostly talked of on the parochial or county scale however during the interviews it became apparent that the towns land rivalries within the parish manifest themselves also. Players represent Mountgeorge (an estate in the village), Pallas Cross, Ileigh or Currabaha before they represent their parish. Thus the G.A.A. is a vital component in the formation of "roots" (Relph), attachment to place on a micro scale.

(For map showing townlands see appendix.)

Playing hurling seems to be synonymous with being from the area. To be from Tipperary alone is reason enough to play hurling as is shown by respondent two in his answer to the question – who do you hurl?

Resp 2: " I play hurling because I am from Co. Tipperary".

It is thus apparent that playing hurling creates feelings of existential insideness (Relph, see chapter two), respondents play hurling because they are from Tipperary (or Borrisoleigh) and inversely they are from Tipperary so they play hurling.

4.2 Away Games – I'm from Borrisoleigh:

The vast majority of present players interviewed were working, or studying in third level, away from home. In Chapter two I alluded to Relph's phenomenology and the deep association and attachments that exist with home places. Indeed the primary attachment a person has with home is his family, the G.A.A. and participation in the local club runs however a close second. The playing of the game away from home creates new associations but senses of place and attachment are reinforced also.

Resp 6: " I was away in college in Dublin for the last three years and playing for Borris was a great link with home. I was up and down training so even-though I was living away I was still connected with Borris. And yeah in college it was great to be wearing Borris tops and being able to say I'm from Borrisoleigh".

Resp 6: "We bring our maroon and white Borris jerseys down to training and we can tell them about our All-Ireland club finals and be proud of them, and I find the same from other people, they are proud of the club they come from".

The maroon and white colours assume significance for those away. They are a symbol of their attachment and belonging to a place. They are identified in terms of these colours by others.

Resp 2: "When you are away from home you like to have that bit of identity, so you can wear your colours, that type of thing".

The wearing of the colours, the jersey seems to be symbolic of both for the players and members of the community. The wearing of the jersey on match day marks players out as “*our team*”(Resp 5). The supporters by wearing the colours reinforce the sense of community identity. Indeed a quick look around Borrisoleigh will reveal shop fronts painted in maroon and white, hauliers lorries painted in maroon and white – to be from Borrisoleigh you must wear the colours. In analysing the data it is impossible to overstate the importance the jersey and its colour to present day players.

Resp 5: “I think that even with the colours of Borrisoleigh hurling team, the community can identify with the colours maroon and white we are very proud of it...You feel like you belong to the club, you are a part of it”.

The same respondent when commenting on parish rivalries once again uses the jersey to illustrate his difference from neighbours.

“I wouldn’t even really like the jersey, I wouldn’t have any empathy with them”.

The connection here with Relph’s empathetic insideness is obvious – the colours are symbolic of Borrisoleigh and the wearing of these colours (in many different forms) shows “a respect for its symbols (Relph, p.54). the maroon and white tell us “that we are here rather than somewhere else” (Relph, p. 53). Thus it is obvious that the colours worn by the club are essential in creating and reinforcing senses of identity for the community. The connection between club and community is strong, so strong in fact that it is difficult to see where club and community begins, does club equal community in Borrisoleigh? Being part of the club is inherently part of the authentic insideness to which Relph alludes. Players are from Borrisoleigh and know this without reflection.

4.3 Club, Community:

A hurling club and a community are easily separated in conceptual terms (e.g. a hurling club is made up of members who play, to be members, they go to matches or play it) but in reality for players the hurling club equals the community in Borrisoleigh. It should be reiterated here that for this project respondents were by and large involved in the local club so their bias here may be obvious. However what is obvious here is that a strong link exists between club and community.

Resp 5: "Most people in Borrisoleigh are part of the hurling club....it helps younger lads in the community to feel part of something and of course on match day the whole parish comes out to watch the team".

The "something" that the respondent here refers to may be one of two things, hurling club or community, but he is more than likely referring to both. So intertwined is the G.A.A. in the community that it is nearly impossible for respondents to talk separately of club and community.

4.4 Rivalries – hotly contested senses of place:

The G.A.A. derives its strength many would agree from its local base where parish rivalries are fervent and in geographical terms, senses of place and identities clash. It is these rivalries in essence that define people as being from this place and knowing that they are from this place. Every respondent interviewed talked of the importance of these rivalries and the role they play in differentiating yourself as a Borrisoleigh person from neighbouring parishes or counties.

Resp 5: "Well in the G.A.A. I definitely think that senses of place are highly contested and this is obvious in the Tipp. Clare rivalry that is on at the moment, it is very bitter and it is reflected on the field and in the stands".

Most rivalries present themselves as good honoured banter but most respondents cited the rivalry with nearest neighbors Drom-Inch as manifesting itself bitterly off the field. The players felt “*a big sense of loss*” (Resp 7). The loss felt is deeper than just the loss of a game.

Resp 7: “When Drom put that game across us all those old sores were opened up. But ye know a bit of it was just healthy ye know, craic, but with a couple of individuals it went deeper than that and is still there”.

Some of the present day players view this rivalry, manifesting itself in club games, as a means for individuals from different parishes to vent personal agendas and settle scores outside of the games themselves.

Resp 2: “But I feel a lot of local rivalries are built up by people’s personal agendas really. Its great to have rivalry mentioned in terms of hurling and in terms of great matches, great duels etc. but it’s a pity sometimes when peoples personal agendas come to affect what you think of other clubs or other players and other people involved in other clubs”.

The sense of identity and place has changed temporally. When respondents from past generations were asked if to-days players felt the same pride and sense of place as those of the past, the answer was an unequivocal yes. The older generation seem to realise that hurling now is not just a recreational and social activity. In the past as stated earlier, hurling would have been the main social outlet but to-days players:

Resp 6: “have more money so I suppose they have more distractions for themselves”

Increased mobility has meant that most players are now living away from home (most are in college) and sacrifices of time and effort are being made by players representing the club.

Resp 4: “Just take the present team for example, the club organises a bus from Limerick on a Tuesday and they won’t be back in Limerick until eleven or half past. There’s other

lads coming from Dublin to train so yes they are committed. Training itself is very intensive now so it's a bigger effort to train and come to training".

Indeed for some of the older generation the present players and supporters of today have in fact a greater sense of place-pride than those of the past.

Int: "And just about the young lads that are playing today, do you think they have the same sense of pride, same sense of pride of place that ye maybe had when ye were hurling?"

Resp 7: "Well I think without a shadow of a doubt, they have an awful lot more. Mm I don't know why it is but its maybe going back to the schools, but ye know they seem to get together in a group and cheer together in a way that wasn't there in the past.....When they are supporting Borris they are out for Borris. In the past it was a lot more diluted, you didn't have the same fanatical thing that's there today so I'd say they're very much more aware of place".

What of the present generation, do they feel as if their sense is as strong as older generations? The younger generations seem to realise that although other distractions are now available,

Resp 2: "Everybody is built with the common goal of winning something because they want to be able to go to other parishes and say we're from Borrisoleigh, we're the county champions, we're the North champions".

There seems to be a movement from social distraction to place defining activity. So much so that involvement in the G.A.A. is in fact the main way in which present day hurlers see boundaries between themselves and neighbouring parishes – the actual physical parochial bounds are thought of in hurling terms.

Int: "Do you think that hurling makes you more aware of the boundary between you and the next parish?"

Resp 5: "Hurling is definitely the place where I most see a boundary, if you meet lads off the field you are just two ordinary people talking, but when you meet them on the field there is a special rivalry, they are from one parish, you are from another.....There is a big border there and I wouldn't want to play for any other club".

The feelings of being inside the boundary are particularly important in areas close to other parishes. Many disputes, controversies etc. arise in these areas where clubs “claim” the allegiance of players for their club, their community.

Int: “Do you think that the G.A.A. and being part of it reinforces the borders around parishes and reinforces the fact that you are from a certain area?”

Resp 2: “It does yeah, because you often have the situation where players are caught in the dispute over where they are from i.e. Borrisoleigh or Templederry etc. People take this personally in that they want the person to be part of their club.....People believe that if a person belongs to a club no other club has a right to claim him etc. This is true especially around Borrisoleigh where we have so many bordering parishes, everybody loves to be able to say I am from Borrisoleigh and I am very much a Borrisoleigh man and people take great pride in saying that they live close to another parish but they are from Borrisoleigh”.

Thus it is obvious that the hurling club is fundamental in reinforcing boundaries. These boundaries have long been the pre-occupation of the geographer (Massey) and must be crossed by the outsider if he wishes to come in.

IDENTITIES CLASH.....



Plate 4.1

.....OR JUST A BEAUTIFUL GAME?



Plate 4.2

4.5 “Blow-ins” – come in:

In Chapter two I discussed Relph’s allusions to “insiderness” and “outsiderness” and the role that they play in an individual’s sense of place. The outsider in Irish terms is often coined the “blow-in”. My father is a “blow-in” and it is from here that I formed the idea of investigating the local G.A.A. club as a means of coming inside.

The insiders view:

Players and members of the hurling club past and present raise many interesting points as to how involvement in the G.A.A. facilitates outsiders’ integration into the community on a number of levels, in the words of Respondent 7:

“What is certain anyway is that they are weighed up right away for their potential in that regard”.

The advantages of the local club as a social outlet are obvious.

Resp 5: I think that there is no way that so many people would have got to know Tony Rabbitte if it hadn’t been for his huge interest in hurling and the same goes for John Keane. They came in and they had a job and knew who they were working for but how did they get to know the rest of the parish, as they are both so well known now, it was obviously through hurling”.

Earlier in this chapter the patriarchal nature of hurling interest was highlighted. This passing on of interest from father to son it seems is also vital to facilitate the integration of the “blow-in” into the community – for the putting down of “roots” which is so important for Relph and indeed Respondent 7.

Resp 7: “I think for parents to bring and have their kids represent them at something they like and to make their mark in the new parish would give them a great feeling of putting down roots so to speak and ye know make them feel that they are contributing for the good of the parish”.

4.6 The “Blow-ins” view:

I interviewed two outsiders to investigate the importance of the G.A.A. and the local club in their integration into the community. The importance of an interest in the G.A.A. provided an easy starting point for the respondent to “*knit into the community*”.

Resp 10: “When you are interested in the G.A.A. and hurling in particular you automatically become part of it all, as you talk about it all and you’d be discussing the last game and the next game and whether it is county or club, once you have an interest in it you just kind of knit into the community”.

This knitting into the community is further facilitated by the involvement of outsiders’ children participating in the local hurling club.

Resp 10: “it is nice for anybody, any father or any parent to see their son hurling and getting on in the community and making teams and that type of thing”.

Interestingly both respondents move to Borrisoleigh was not their first move away from home. Indeed in any move the G.A.A. has facilitated integration into a community atmosphere.

Resp 9: “The first thing that any Irish person does when they go over to London, well generally in those days you were sought out by the local clubs, and then you immediately became part of that local club and that local community that was built round that club in London”.

Once again the indelible link between club and community is evident and involvement in the G.A.A. creates a connection, an implicit insideness that can be anywhere, anywhere that an interest in G.A.A. is shown even in London.

Resp 10: “It seems to go that way that lads that hurl and have an interest in hurling and all that, kind of go together, go to matches together, go for a few drinks together. It is the very same if I met a stranger from anywhere else, from any other county or any other club for that matter within the county, if he had an interest in hurling and going to matches we could just kind of gel together”.

Even-though participation in the club facilitates the ease of transition from one community to another, home places are never forgotten and loyalties to ones own home place is still paramount for the “blow-in”.

Resp 10: “I am longer in Borrisoleigh than I was anywhere else and Kilkenny would still be my number one county, I would rather see Kilkenny win than anyone else, but after that I would like to see Laois win an All-Ireland final, I doubt if I ever will. After that then it would be Tipperary all the way”.

4.7 Sport Space as a Symbol:

Sport space in Borrisoleigh has always been of huge significance. For players of the past the towns land fields that were dotted around the parish were of primary significance.

Resp 7: “When I was a young lad our own back field was the field for the immediate area, the Old Kiln Field, that’s in the poem Lovely Fair Ileigh. That for me would have been sacred where hurling was concerned”.

From towns land to parish then as respondents progressed to playing in the parish field.

Resp 7: “When I got on the Borris team for the first time then, the field took on a meaning alright..... once you cot out onto the field training with the boys you were at home no doubt”.

The significance of the hurling field for the parish as a “social centre” is not lost on the players of the present.

Resp 2: “It will always remain a focal point for the town because in the evening especially the summer evenings it is always a place for the people to go if they want something to do, as there is always a match or training. It provides a social centre for the parish and surrounding area”.

Resp 5: “It is definitely a focal point. When tickets come out for matches the whole crowd goes down and there is great banter over who is going to win and all this. Whenever a match is on in the park, the entire parish is down watching it and supporting the local team”.

Indeed for those living outside Borrisoleigh the hurling field is to a certain extent a familiar landmark.

Resp 4: “Everybody outside Borris knows where the hurling field in Borris is”.

Resp 6: "I once heard a Borris man say and you know who I'm talking about , that everybody knows where Joe Stapleton's pub and the hurling field are in Borrisoleigh. Its definitely a focal point. I suppose after the church it's the next big meeting place for people in the parish".

Thus it is obvious that the actual playing space represents more than just a place for games to be played, it is a focal point for the community. Nostalgic references to times of old "simpler times" centre around descriptions of the townland fields throughout the parish. The hurling field then maybe represents a barrier to the encroachment to the time-space compression to which Massey alludes (chapter two).

CHAPTER FIVE

Other Vignettes

5.1 The Irish Countrywomans Association

At this stage it seemed pertinent to leave Borrisoleigh hurling club and examine other cultural vignettes. The I.C.A., the camoige club and Peri-urban hurling club were chosen.

The I.C.A. according to the member I talked to view the association as a vehicle for the “promotion of culture”, by arranging Irish nights, seminars etc. The association is divided into guilds on a parochial basis and there are twenty-four guilds in North Tipperary Federation. Above the federation is the provincial council. Thus the association mirrors the G.A.A. on the organisational level. Members of the I.C.A. feel rivalries however are not fierce, senses of place are not hotly contested. Membership is in decline – the I.C.A. members interviewed had joined the association thirty years ago, at which time the membership totaled thirty-five and upwards. The current number of members in the Borrisoleigh guild is fifteen and little or no new members have joined over recent years. Reasons postulated by present members for the fall off in interest centre on the increasing amount of recreational activities available to young women now e.g. night clubs, that weren’t readily available for women thirty years ago. Constraints in the amount of recreational time available now as many women juggle careers and family life.

5.2 Camoige Club:

The camoige club is essentially, the female version of the hurling club. Borrisoleigh camoige club is still in its infancy, it was founded in the early nineties. Rivalries however are not on the same basis as in hurling circles. The main reason for this is that neighbouring clubs such as Toomevara and Drom-Inch have well established clubs of long tradition with the result Borrisoleigh and these clubs are in different leagues. Thus a comparison between the rivalries experienced by camoige players and those of hurlers is virtually impossible as the hurling club operates at the same level as its near neighbours. Rivalries then, in camoige terms, form more from regular competitive league matches (with clubs from anywhere in the county) than neighbouring parish clashes. Luckily the woman I interviewed was involved with both the hurling and the camoige club so an insight into the levels of commitment and pride of place held by youngsters playing both hurling and camoige in the parish was gained.

Int: " Now you would be involved with the young lads and you would be going on about representing Borris, would it be the same with the girls?"

Resp 3: "It would yeah, it would once you get, no it wouldn't really, the boys would give you a lot more. They have a lot more interest, I mean it would be a struggle for the girls to live up to that".

It becomes clear that when girls reach a certain age the interest in representing the parish wanes.

Resp 3: "When girls come to fourteen or fifteen, I find it a problem here with them but when we were in Drom, it wasn't a problem".

Borrisoleigh is described as a town by the interviewee where activities like the Comhaltas and set dancing are available "*whereas if you were out in a small country place like Drom, they have nothing else to do*". As was stated earlier, respondent three is involved in both the hurling and camoige club at underage level (i.e. from under 16 down to under

10), providing her with an insight into the future of both clubs. The future for the camoige club looks bleak.

Resp 3: "I don't think it will develop on because there aren't enough of them coming up really to keep it going".

This is in stark contrast to the present youngsters involved in the hurling club.

Resp 3: "All they want to do is hurl. When we go down there under 10's and under 12's are down there most nights for training".

The reason for the differences may lie in many areas. The patriarchal nature of interest in hurling seems to be the most obvious difference, but where do these traditions come from. This point will be discussed further in the concluding chapter.

5.3 The Peri-urban Hurling Club:

Differences between players from the urban club and those from Borrisoleigh were obvious from the outset.

Int: "Why do you hurl Barry?"

Resp 5: "I just like playing for the social reasons".

No mention of tradition, representation of place or place pride here. Indeed, "*most people in the community wouldn't have a clue how the team was doing there so it makes no difference to them either way*". Thus playing for the club Ballyboden St. Enda's does not make the respondent feel more a part of the community. In essence is there any link between community in club and club in urban areas such as Dublin? The fact that no parish rule exists seems to suggest that no such link is evident. In Dublin you can come from anywhere and play for any club.

Resp 5: "The parish rule doesn't apply, it doesn't come from the countryside, because you could be living anywhere and you could be playing for any club in Dublin, so it makes no odds where you're from".

Parish rivalries then are basically non-evident. Rivalries are based on striving to beat the best, inter-club rivalry exists but not inter-parish, a stark contrast to the situation in rural areas like Borrisoleigh where parish borders form boundaries within which identity is definite and unselfconscious. In wider geographical terms the connotations are obvious 0 the faceless, placeless nature of urbania where feelings of incidental outsidersness (Relph, see chapter two) are in stark contrast to the symbols and rituals which create such strong feelings of rootedness in rural communities like Borrisoleigh.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

What criteria should be used when deciding if a subject is worthy of academic attention? It's pervasiveness within society? It's degree of media coverage? It's social or economic significance? The answer to any of these questions is "yes". Thus sport is a subject worthy of academic attention. This is particularly true for the geographer because as Bale has quite rightly pointed out the themes of space and place are central to both geography and sport. This thesis in its embryonic stages was a sports geography project but has since developed into something different – it is not a sports geography of Borrisoeigh but instead investigates the way in which hurling affects, reinforces (or not) creates (or not) identities and senses of place.

The main objectives of the thesis could be summarised as follows:

investigate the role the G.A.A. (local hurling club) plays in creating, reinforcing and maintaining senses of place for players of the past and present and the role these players see the G.A.A. playing in maintaining community identities and boundaries, examine other cultural organisations and urban hurling clubs to see if differences exist, examine the "outsiders" sense of place and the role the hurling club plays in their integration into communities. Added to these can be an investigation of sport space as a symbol and focal point which was added after my first trial interview took place. It must be stated here that these are only a summary of the objectives, as interviews progressed many

interesting ideas came up that were outside the original objectives but are addressed in the study.

The passing on of interest from father to son is of paramount importance and this interest is the primary reason for players taking up the game. Family tradition is important especially for the present day players. Indeed the idea of representing ones parish, ones community is where the differences lie between past and present. Today's players sense of place seems stronger than those of the past, its much more than a recreational activity for players now. The proof, well it lies in the inordinate distances traveled to train and to come *home*. For Relph home places are places that people know intimately and are places in which they are known. I think the study proves that hurling is an activity that facilitates such intimate knowledge, it is a vehicle for people to assert their identity both at home and away. The wearing of the colours ties you to home, the colours maroon and white assume symbolic importance for those at home, but more especially, for those away, they represent a way of differentiating themselves from others, a way of saying "we are from Borrisoleigh".

So intertwined is the hurling club in the community that it is easy to suggest that the word community could be replaced by club in Borrisoleigh. There is for virtually everyone according to Relph, a deep association with, and consciousness of the places where we are born and grew up, where we live now or where we have had particularly moving experiences. In essence then we are rooted to these places, the hurling club is fundamental in rooting people to home places. The club references the physical boundaries between Borrisoleigh and the next parish, this is where people see their

identity and the identity of others meeting at these boundaries. Match day provides people within these boundaries with the opportunity to assert their identities and the players realise that they represent these identities. Massey would argue that these boundaries create a self-enclosing and defensive sense of place. It would seem however that this sense of place (created and reinforced by the local hurling club) is none akin to Relph's notion of a point of departure from which to orient ourselves in the world.

To be inside a place in Relph's phenomenology is to belong to it and identify with it and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with place, in essence you are existentially inside. Playing hurling reinforces this deep and complete identity with a place, you play hurling because you are from Tipperary – or Borrisoleigh, or conversely you are from Tipperary so you hurl. An interest in hurling however makes it possible for the outsider to come in, it is a gateway into a community. This is particularly evident in the study when respondents found themselves in places where incidental outsidership (places are seen as a background or setting for life) is experienced i.e. London, Dublin. Here the club provided access to a community, albeit a community not defined by boundaries. Where communities are enclosed by boundaries (i.e. Tipperary, Borrisoleigh) as stated these boundaries are reinforced by the hurling club but involved in the club facilitates the crossing of these boundaries, the coming inside. This integration is furthered by the patriarchal passing down of interest, the outsiders sons playing the game reinforce his integration. However, no matter how long an outsider is in this new community (for Resp 10, 22 years) his loyalty remains true to his home place – hurling

still provides a link with home-a way of showing his colours, even-though a man has moved to Borrisoleigh, Kilkenny may still be his “number one county” (Resp 10).

The importance of sport space is also of particular importance. As mentioned earlier, the field itself in Borrisoleigh is a focal point for the community. Players and supporters alike have an intimate knowledge of this space, it is “home” for the players who train there and is a place everybody outside Borrisoleigh (well in North Tipperary anyway!) knows. However it is obvious that sport space works on a more subtle level also in the context of identity. Respondent seven’s interview (Respondent seven has won a club All-Ireland with Borrisoleigh) shows how identity is traced from family to national and how this can be represented by the places in which he hurled. He hurled against the cow house gable at the *family* home, from here he progressed to the Kiln field (the *towns land* field), in to the park in Borrisoleigh (the *parochial* field), from here to Semple Stadium when winning a *county* final, to the gaelic grounds Limerick when the *provincial* title and on to Croke Park when winning the *national* title. The similarities between this and Whelan’s Chinese boxes are obvious as bases of regionalism and identity go from the family to the national level.

Is this sense of place and identity created uniquely by the hurling club? I am mindful here that the research only deals briefly with few other vignettes, time and resources being an obvious constraint. However there is much to be learnt about senses of place and identity from chapter five. The I.C.A. by their own admission see the “promotion of culture” as their main objective. Their association is organised on a roughly similar

hierarchical basis as the G.A.A. yet rivalries are not intense and membership numbers have more than halved in the last thirty years, due to an increase in distractions. The camoige club seems to be in decline and membership dwindles when players give up and pursue other distractions. Contrast this to the interest and commitment that is prevalent in the hurling club where hurling is much more than a game. The interest infects the community as a whole both players and supporters as identities clash on match day.

Perhaps even more interesting is the differences between the peri-urban club and rural club. No parish rule exists, players can, in effect, play for whomever they want. Geographers have long catalogued the sense of placelessness felt by those in urban areas. The study would seem to reinforce these beliefs as place rivalry is non-existent. However the “social reasons” bind players to clubs. Earlier I alluded to the intertwined nature of club and community that, in fact, the word community might be replaced by club in the context of Borrisoleigh. Is club not a means of finding a community in the urban setting? Respondent 9 felt that involvement in the G.A.A. in London, joining a club, helped him in essence to join a community. This is perhaps worthy of further attention.

There are a number of points worth explaining at this juncture. The G.A.A. club in many areas means hurling and gaelic football combined. This to a large extent is not the case in Borrisoleigh, as is the case in many areas in Tipperary it is the poor relation, in terms of this thesis, references to the G.A.A. club, are in essence references to the hurling club.

Sports are vehicles and embodiments of meaning (MacClancy). As such then sports status and interpretation is continually open to negotiation and are subject to conflict. Thus I (like Mac Clancy) did not feel any need to enter into debates on the definition of sport versus games and ritual. I would hope that what the thesis makes clear is the fact that sports and hurling in particular can take on social and cultural meanings, they are for many not just games. One needs to look no further than the interviews carried out with the present generation to see that hurling for them is more than a game, in many cases enjoyment of the game was one of the last reasons given in response to the question – why do you hurl? This doesn't stop with the hurlers, it is felt by the community as a whole. A recent championship win over near neighbours and bitter rivals Toomevara proves this. Respondent nine referred to the “feeling” that has been evident throughout the parish. This I think is closely related to Bales “psychic income” (Sports Geography, p. 23), where the whole population of the area is upbeat after the win, thus the games assume great social significance for the whole community.

In many recent discourses on senses of place, the phenomenon of time-space compression inevitably comes up. I do not wish to engage in any major discussion here, but I think it is pertinent to discuss the thesis in relation to Massey's progressive sense of place mentioned in chapter two. To summarise her arguments, she questioned a) the value of history driven introverted ideals of place and the recovery of sanitized heritages, b) the placing of boundaries around places thus reinforcing the counter-position of “us” and “them”, and c) the questionable identification of place with community. Firstly, present players cite tradition as one of the main reasons for playing hurling, the tradition

of representing their place. It could be argued that these traditions are grounded in times (their father's, their grandfather's) when there was little else to do except play hurling. Is this tradition then real when it is built on the foundation of a time when there was little recreational activity? However reading the interviews should indicate the importance of traditions especially for those living away from home – the fact that these players attach such significance to their traditions proves that senses of place are inherently built on histories. In these days of globalisation people invoke their histories and traditions to define identities. Secondly, places are and need to be placed within the boundaries – the hurling club reinforces these boundaries and the rivalries prove that senses of place are thought of in terms of “us” and “them”. Thirdly, the study indicates the impossibility of *not* identifying community with place. A place is its people – its community, and people are their place (Relph). So intertwined is Borrisoleigh, the place and its people, that it is impossible to speak of one without the other.

The danger of undertaking a study in an area where you are from and on an organisation in which you are involved creates a great need for the researcher to be reflexive. I must admit that I had preconceptions coming into this study – not all positive in terms of the G.A.A. Anyone involved in the G.A.A. has a great love for the games but in-built is also a form of cynicism for the hierarchy of the organisation itself. However I feel the inside knowledge of Borrisoleigh and the G.A.A. were of paramount importance in acquiring the data i.e. conducting the interviews. Like any study however there are areas in which the researcher would have liked to have covered, given the time and resources and these are as follows:

- The role the media plays in maintaining and to some extent creating rivalries was mentioned and is perhaps worthy of further study.
- An investigation into the origins of the traditions that the players of the present refer to and the role that players of the past play in passing down these traditions i.e. to what extent is this notion of tradition learned.
- To what extent this present sense of place alluded to in some of the interviews (i.e. crowds, supporters joining together in groups) is learned from other cultures and sports.
- A further investigation of other cultural vignettes e.g. Comhaltas and their role in creating, maintaining and reinforcing senses of place.
- An investigation into the individuals within the community who have no links or interest in the G.A.A. to discover the ways in which their senses of place manifest themselves.
- The vast majority of the interviewees (all but three) were male. The study is littered with references to patriarchal interest, thus account needs to be taken of the gendered nature of this study. In the future a similar study from a female viewpoint. Also more investigation into senses of place from the supporter's viewpoint – do they feel the hurling club creates, maintains and reinforces their sense of identity?

In concluding the conclusion then, there are a number of points worthy of note. The first and perhaps the most important is that sporting organisations and the G.A.A. in particular are worthy of academic attention outside studies of nationalism. They are as Mac Clancy suggests a means of reflecting on society. This project was undertaken tentatively but I hope it suggests that the G.A.A. is worthy of academic attention, there are geographical avenues to be explored.

In wider geographical terms it is obvious that senses of place and identity are still of paramount importance in this era of the shrinking world. So much so in fact that people now struggle for ways of identifying with place. The players and people of Borrisoleigh have indeed a way of expressing their identity through playing for, supporting and involving themselves in the local G.A.A. club. It is often quoted that “hurling is not life

or death, it is something more important”, how true this is I do not know but what is evident from this project is that it is not merely “just a game”.

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APPENDIX

THE BORRIS-ILEIGH ANTHEM

Lovely Fair Ileigh

I know a little winding road, so beautiful to stray,
When the wild perfume of the hawthorn's bloom, and the woodbine skirts the way.
The heather brown upon the hill, and the wild flowers in the lea,
The shady road winds on between, to Lovely Fair Ileigh.

Ileigh it is a beauty spot, down in a shady dell,
The green hills fair raise above, where many a brave man fell.
Here the trees are evergreen, the flowers you'll always see,
The roses' perfume scents the air 'round Lovely Fair Ileigh.

If you wander up the green hill slopes, midst the pure and balmy air,
You can view the rolling plains below, so lovely bright and fair.
There nature gives her richest garb to every bush and tree,
And spreads the wild flowers o'er the vale, 'round Lovely Fair Ileigh.

At evening time in the old kiln field, you can see the boys so bold,
'Twould remind you of old Knocknagow, in Kickham's story told.
To see them wield their camans, so brave and manfully,
There's many a Matt the Thrasher 'mongst the lads of Fair Ileigh.

Yonder stands the little church, and the graveyard all around,
Where three of Ireland's noble dead, rest in that holy ground.
There are three green graves, sad I ween, no monument have they
Where rests in peace the ashes of young Russell, Bourke and Shea.
But the day is not far distant, and we hope it may not be,
When we'll raise a monument o'er their graves in Lovely Fair Ileigh.

Source: 'A Century of G.A.A. in Borris-Ileigh', p. 206.

Up Borris-Ileigh '49

I'll sing you a song of the brave young fifteen
Who went forth in the year forty-nine
To gain honour and fame in the grand hurling game
And all the great champions outshine.

Chorus:

So here's to the boys of Borris-Ileigh,
The pride and the joy of our land,
May they keep fit and strong till they're led to Croke Park,
With the 'soggart' aroon in command.

Tipperary's great hurlers they put to the test,
Boherlahan, Holycross and Roscrea.
The pick of the North, the South, Mid and West,
Fell before their onslaught in dismay.

Up Borris-Iligh, may their hearts never fail
With hands always steady and true,
As they march on the field, all opponents must yield
To the gallant old white and blue.

Knockavilla were last to draw up for the fray
On the showgrounds in old Thurles town.
They had hoped for the best but just like the rest,
Before better men they went down.

'Tipperary's G.A.A. Ballads – A Millennium Production', p. 337.

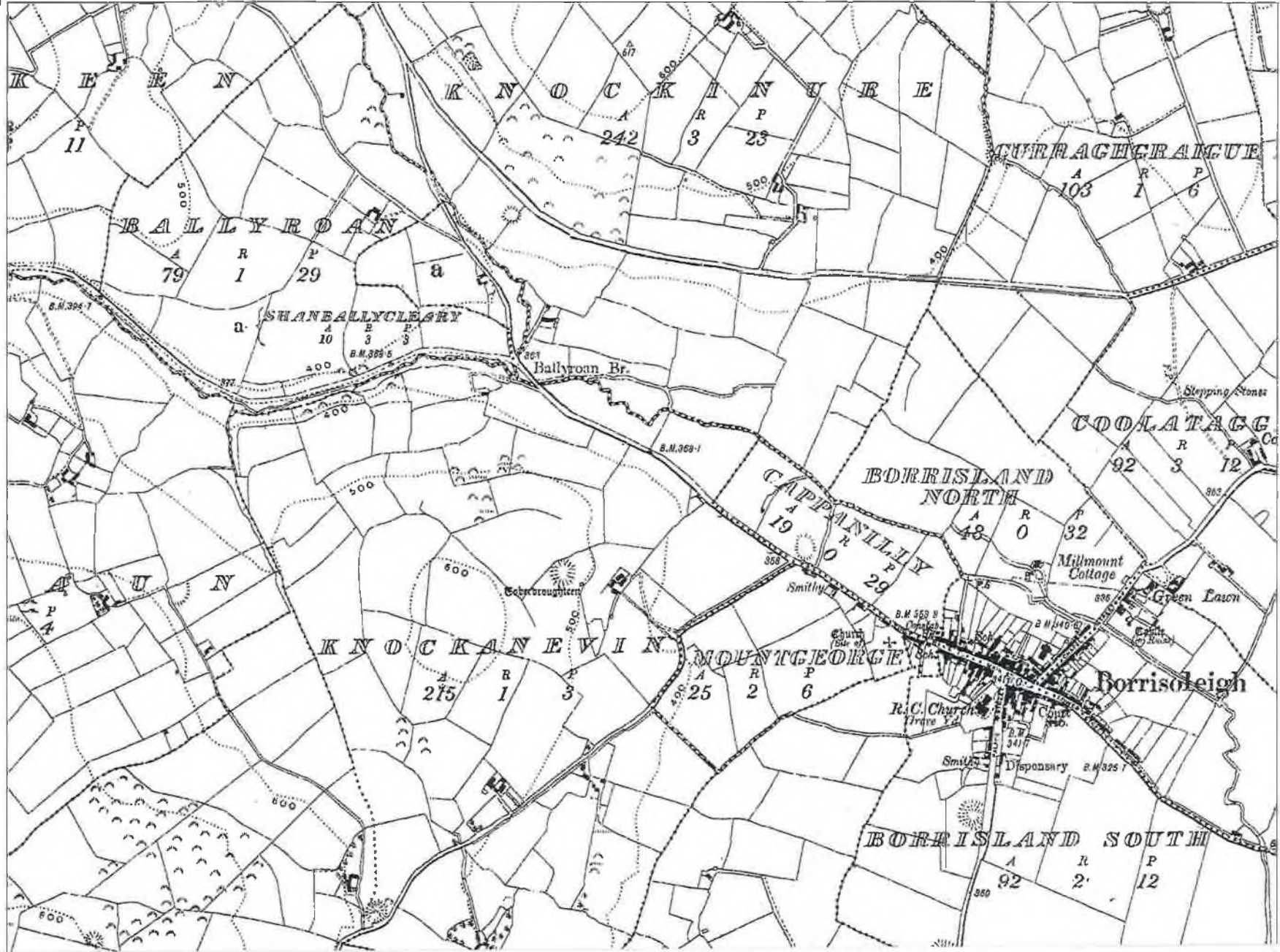
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INTERVIEWS

Int: Why do you hurl Barry?

Resp 5: I just like playing hurling for social reasons.

Int: And you know the way you are in college and living away from home now, does hurling make you feel more that you are from Templeogue now that you are going home hurling with them?

Resp 5: Not really, no, it just doesn't, 'cause it doesn't seem to give me that much of an identity.

Int: Does being of the club Ballybowden make you feel more part of the community around Templeogue?

Resp 5: Not really no, because there wouldn't really be that much about the club in the community, there's one newsletter and that's about it. Most people in the community wouldn't have a clue how the team was doing there, so it makes not difference to them either way.

Int: Yea, and does the GAA make you more aware of the boundaries between Templeogue and other places?

Resp 5: No, because there is no such thing as boundaries around Dublin, because the parish rule doesn't apply, it doesn't come from the countryside, because you could be living anywhere and you could be playing for any club in Dublin, so it makes no odds where you are from.

Int: And do parish rivalries and club rivalries exist?

Resp5: There would be no parish rivalries but there would be rivalries against other clubs but the club rivalries could be just because a club is good and it wouldn't really matter where they are from and that would be the main reason.

Int: That's basically it now thank you very much.

Int: Tell me Matt, why you took up hurling and played it?

Resp 1: Well when I was a young boy we had no money and there wasn't a whole pile to do except hurl. We used to go over there into that field and puck around and when we got older we went down to Pallas bridge field to puck around. The bridge field was a great place for people to pass time playing hurling. There was a number of these fields dotted around the parish up in lleigh there and over in Currabaha side!

Int: And from there into Borris was it?

Resp 1: Well when I was 14 I played in Borris on the under-14 team. And then I had no hurling with Borris until I was 16 and I played minor with Borris. Now I was fortunate enough to play with Tipperary minors in 1957.

Int: Was there a sense of pride having represented Borris?

Resp 1: Well I came home having won and was proud as punch to have represented Borris and Pallas Cross here. There was always great hurling tradition here.

Int: How was this tradition formed or where did it come from?

Resp 1: Well John, I suppose my father and uncles passed it down. They all played with Borris and their interest was a kind of passed on to us here and sure hurling was all we knew them times. Since the G.A.A. was formed that was our only pass-time.

Int: You mentioned various hurling fields around the parish earlier. Would there have been much rivalry within the parish?

Resp 1: Oh there would John yeah. All the players from the different fields would often meet up in the matches in Borris. There used to be a league where lleigh would have a team, Currabaha, the streets would be one and these matches would be hotly contested. And sure as you know this tradition still lives today in the Bush n' the Brier. Every year the lower grade players in the parish will come together in two teams. The Bush team would be, we'll say the lleigh side while the Briers are on the Currabaha side. A field is picked somewhere around the parish and there's a hat collection with the proceeds given to some charity around, (laughing) as you know full well John these are often hotly contested.

Int: And what about rivalries with other parishes?

Resp 1: Well we always had fierce rivalries with Drom. They're very near us here only a mile and a half down the road. Templederry and Toome as well. But I must say these were for the most part all friendly. We'd meet on the fields around Tipp and the matches'd be tough, but after in whatever town the match was, we had more money then we were older, we'd maybe all players from both sides go and have a drink or two after the match and mingle among each other.....

Int: And did playing in these matches for Borris give you a sense of place, a sense of being from Borris.

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Resp 1: Well it did because you see everyone from Borris would be there watching you with the colours on and you'd feel like you were representing you're parish and family and Pallas Cross and sure you'd be honoured.

Int: And what about the lads playing to-day Matt do you think they feel the same pride, sense of place of being from Borris?

Resp 1: Well they have more money than we did so I suppose they have more distractions for themselves. Like when we were young men if you were good enough to get on a county team you got a meal after the game and maybe one after the next training session. Today lads are given tracksuits and there's lots of perks like golf outings organised and trainers and dieticians..... But they deserve this because even to be a top class club player as you know there is a lot of commitment expected. Just take the present senior team for example. The club organises a bus from Limerick on a Tuesday. I'd say about two thirds of the team are in these institutions there and they come home after lectures to train on Tuesday and then wont be back in Limerick until 11 or 11:30pm. There's other lads coming from Dublin to train so yes they are committed. Training itself is very intensive now so it's a bigger effort to train and come to training. And now for example we're playing Toome in 2 weeks and I've never seen such an effort put in by players.

Int: Now, just to ask about people, we'll say, from outside the parish for eg. Tony Rabbitte, John Keane senior. How important do you think the involvement with the G.A.A. and their sons playing is for them becoming part of the community?

Resp 1: Well I think its very important. All the men you mentioned there were men who married-in to Borrisoleigh. They would have had no real connections here prior to that. The local club is a great outlet for people like that, strange to an area, to become involved in the community. Both these men's sons are now playing for Borris and every-body knows them and they are prominent within the club and community. The club was a great way for these people to get to know other people around Borris.

Int: And finally, the hurling pitch itself, would you see this as a focal point in Borrisoleigh?

Resp 1: Yes well as I said earlier, back when I was young there were pitches dotted around Borris in the towns lands like below at Pallas Bridge. But the field in Borris is definitely a focal point for hurlers and supporters to meet and have the craic. Everybody outside Borris knows where the hurling field in Borris is.

Int: Tell me the experiences that you have had with your involvement with the G.A.A. in your life?

Resp 9: I have experienced this on a couple of occasions in my life because of my involvement with the G.A.A. and my club in Galway which was Turloughmore and with my college which was St. Mary's college in Galway, and then after that I moved to London and lived there for 11 years. The first thing that any Irish person who has interest in the G.A.A. does when they go out to London, well generally in those days you were sought out by the local club, and then you immediately became part of that club and that local community that was built round that club in London. Then straight away you had a sense of belonging there. There were twelve million people living there and as soon as you arrived you felt a total stranger, and then you felt that you belonged. That was a huge help in life in London in those days because it was friendships and comradery that extended into your social life and into your working life, because if you were ever anybody in that circle that was ever out of work or in need of work, it was a network that worked, within the city of London and basically through the G.A.A. that all your contacts and work contacts were formed, you were literally climbing through the G.A.A. circles.

Int.: As a man coming from Galway to Tipperary - Borrisoleigh, did the G.A.A. help you to become part of the community?

Resp 9: Absolutely, it was probably about eight or nine years before I came to Borrisoleigh, I had visited on several occasions to watch hurling matches so I built up a knowledge of the hurling team. So when we came to live in Borrisoleigh which is my wife's parish, straight away the first and natural thing to do was to immediately join the hurling club, so straight away again you have that sense of belonging and that common bond that stretches through a huge number of people in the parish, I was then linked to them and I certainly hate to imagine what it would have been like to settle in with any strange community or parish, not having that sporting involvement and not having that crutch to lean on. It is a huge social factor.

Int: Now that Daragh and Phillip and Mark are playing, does that reinforce further your sense of belonging to the place of belonging to Borrisoleigh?

INTERVIEWS

Resp 9: Absolutely, because part of any G.A.A. club is that we all look to the young lads that are coming up and as chairman of the senior club we are always looking to see who are the good young lads coming through and who are playing sport and we are always looking for the senior hurlers of the future straight away, so that if they are eight or nine or ten years of age, we are trying to spot them. Just after I returned Mark had started playing hurling and then followed Phillip and so we got involved in a sense as well as with various underage county teams up along as well it has been great because people would come to you and say I say your lad in the park the other night, he is hurling well, but it involves a lot more when there is a family involvement.

Int: And, about the rivalries that exist, it seems that they are fairly strong, would you concur with that?

Resp 9: Absolutely yes, the great strengths of the G.A.A. are built on two things that sound almost opposites, comradeship and rivalry. Comradeship that is in your own club and the rivalry that is with other clubs in your division and county and particularly with neighbouring clubs and that has been part and parcel of the G.A.A. all down along through the years. It has changed, I think a bit, the main thing about the rivalry is that anyone that saw or experienced us playing Drum Inch last year in the county league could see that rivalry is still as strong and as healthy as it was forty years ago. Any one that was in Nenagh to watch the Toomevara match will realise that it is still as strong and intense as it has ever been. The change that I see in it is a change for the better, in the community people have come to realise that there is a time and place for rivalries, the place for it is out on the field in the play. If we carry them beyond that we do it in a good natured sort of way, and people have learned that they can be the most intense sporting rivals but can actually socialise together and have great respect for each other outside of that. The vast majority of the Toomevara team, for the last ten years have socialised in Borrisoleigh more than anywhere else. They socialise quite well with the Borrisoleigh players and they show support to the Borrisoleigh club and I personally in all my time have never seen an incident happen that was out of order due to rivalries, people respect each-other.

Int: You have lived here in Borrisoleigh and have seen the very successful players and teams that have come through there in the middle to late eighties, do you think that the fellas that are playing now have the same sense of pride of place and sense of place and sense of belonging to a place and all the pride that is associated with that or do you think that has changed?

Resp 9: Life has changed obviously because there are more distractions for young players particularly and social scenes and social life has changed even since that team of the eighties the whole social scene in Ireland has changed dramatically. There are more pressures on young people and players, but I don't think that their sense of pride in their club has diminished one little bit, in fact, I think that the players of today have pride burning in them which is at least as strong as any one who has went before them.

Int: Now that you are the chairman of the club, in looking out at the community of Borrisoleigh from inside the club itself, what role do you see the G.A.A. playing for the community itself?

Resp 9: Even though we have a thriving town in Borrisoleigh we would still very much consider ourselves as a rural based parish, and it has a huge role, I don't think that there is any other class in society in a parish like Borrisoleigh that has a bigger role to play than the G.A.A. club. I suppose over the last twenty odd years since I came to live in Borrisoleigh in 1978. 23 years ago, and in the first three years of that had the pleasure of winning a county final, it hadn't happened in so long and then eventually that success arrived and was followed by two more county finals and then followed by an All-Ireland club championship and this parish was absolutely riding on the crest of a wave, it gave a whole lift to the whole spirit of the parish. Then unfortunately we have gone through a number of years now without any success. But obviously when you go through a period when success becomes hard to achieve, the whole community feel it and as the time goes on you can almost sense how much they yearn for the success again. I hope that two weeks ago we took some kind of a step back on the road to success again, we beat Toomevara and there wasn't scenes like it seen in the division after a Tipperary match in a long number of years. Since that there is a feeling throughout the whole parish, every where you go, every shop you go into, and when you talk to people they are all looking forward to the next day out and hopefully it will be more of the same.

Int: It seems from my studies that the hurling club and the community are so intertwined that they are in fact the same thing.

Resp 9: Absolutely, there would be very few houses in Borrisoleigh where there wouldn't be any interest in Borrisoleigh G.A.A. club.

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Int: Now just about the park itself, is it a focal point for the community or do you think that it would be known as a centre or focal point?

Resp 9: Very much so, and I suppose we are lucky in Borrisoleigh as well as the park is within short walking distance for every youngster - it is just a short stroll from the town of Borrisoleigh itself. It is also situated near the schools. It is very much part and parcel of day to day life, and in the summer holidays you only have to see every young lad heads off to the park whether it is eleven or twelve o'clock in the day and he may not return home until five or six in the evening. There is a great sense of safety about it as well, most of the parents feel that to have a young fella or a young girl in the park means that they are safe, they are all right while they are there. Whether it is with a hurley and a sliotar or kicking football, they feel that their time is being well spent.

Int: You came into Borris from outside, what role did the G.A.A. help you to play in becoming part of the community or did it have any role?

Resp 10: When you are interested in hurling and in G.A.A. in particular you automatically become part of it all, as you talk about it all and you be discussing the last game and the next game and whether it is the county or the club, once you have an interest in it you just kind of knit into the community.

Int: How important is it for you after coming in from outside to become part of the community that your sons play for?

Resp 10: It is sort of the one thing, every young fella in the parish at one stage or another plays hurling, some lads of course give it up as they reach their teens and other lads have more interest in it and sure it is nice for anybody, any father or any parent to see their son hurling and getting on in the community and making teams and that type of thing.

Int: And about yourself, when you came into the community, did you play hurling?

Resp 10: Firstly, we moved around a good bit, my father sold his farm in Kilkenny and bought a farm in Laois, so it was the same procedure again knitting in. I hurled with a few different clubs, I hurled with Borrisinossory, and then I transferred and hurled with Earl. Then when I came here in 1979, there were a lot of fellas who were hurling with Borrisoleigh who were on the county and there were fellas outside of Borrisoleigh like Pat Kavannagh who were after coming, he was after coming to Borrisoleigh and he was also after winning an All-Ireland with Kilkenny. Mick Cowan was after coming and he was after winning an All-Ireland and captaining Tipperary, Noel Dwyer, Gerry Stapleton and Timmy Stapleton. There were a lot of better hurlers than me that would have been on the team but I played a few junior matches with Borrisoleigh and then I transferred back to Earl again and played with Earl for a couple of years after that. There wasn't a hope of getting on the senior team here at that stage, not a hope.

Int: Now that you are living here would you feel much rivalry with neighbouring clubs?

Resp 10: Well I am here now 22 years and this is home here now and I feel the same rivalry as any other Borrisoleigh person would for Toomevara or Nenagh or Kilruan or any of those clubs. I am longer in Borrisoleigh than I was anywhere else and Kilkenny would be still my number one county, I would rather see Kilkenny win than anybody else, but after that I would like to see Laois win an All-Ireland final, I doubt if I ever will. After that then it would be Tipperary all the way, I am in the place so long now, I am one of the boys now.

Int: When you came in first, did others that were hurling become friendly with you just because you played or did they recognise you outside of your job with the hurling?

Resp 10: It seems to go that way, that lads that hurl and have an interest in hurling and all that kind of go together, go to matches together, go for a few drinks together. It is the very same as if I met a stranger from anywhere else, from any other county or any other club for that matter within the county, if he had an interest in hurling and going to matches, we would just kind of gel together.

Int: Well tell me Tim, the main reasons why you took up hurling as a young lad?

Resp 7: Well now John - my father, as simple as that. My very earliest memories would be him teaching me how to hit a ball out in the yard. The thing I most remember is the patience he had with me, you know, he never left him short of time. And I remember even in later years, he never hit the ball hard at me, he never wanted to take my confidence and in particular he taught me the way he hurled and the way he

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wanted me to hurl. He was belong to the old school - first time hurling, he could not understand the way it changed afterwards and he had the height of regards afterwards for Sean Kenny and fellas like that who brought the solo-run to a fine art, but in its own place he didn't like everyone to do it and so on. I suppose yeah, hurling then to me in the years that preceded my first match with Borris would be as I remember it either hurling with my father in the yard or when he couldn't be with me, hurling against the gable end of the cow house. You know that was often very frustrating too, because the stone wall on the thing was rough and the ball would come back in all different directions and you could miss the gable and the ball would end up in a heap of nettles or worse still lose it. I often gave more of the day looking for the ball than hurling. Whenever jobs were done in the morning and evening, I could give the rest of the day hurling by myself out in the field, anywhere, hitting the ball up in the air and stuff, it was a huge part of my life, but not in the most organised way. I didn't often have a good hurley or good ball and then we were miles away from the village so if you lost the ball you might not have one for two weeks again. So after that then I'd say I remember my first match, a neighbour, Mick Collins coming into the yard and saying "come on". Ah, I couldn't believe that I was being played and ah the usual story. I was a couple of years younger than the age-group was but I got on and we actually won. It was a North Tipp. Championship final, it would be under twelve so the very first match that I played I had a medal. But the wake up in my area then, Ileigh was always very much an entity and yet it was part of Borris-Ileigh and I was very conscious of what my father said. He used to tell us about when there were two teams and they met in the junior mid final. And I remember him describing a late goal that Borris scored and beat us, and I remember him telling us a lot of the fellas that played for Ileigh and so forth. But, whatever split was there was no enmity, he never carried that, it was all good and mm I never felt, when I hurled for Borris and there was more from Ileigh on the team that there should be two teams. But I was always sort of proud being from Ileigh that Borris-Ileigh was written down and not Borris-Ileigh and mm I was in bad health then when hurling would have meant a lot to me in my late teens and ah it was only when I started to feel a bit better and hurl a bit better that hurling then became a part of life. But there wasn't the same structure in place then that there is now. I'll put it to you like this, that then you wouldn't necessarily realise your potential to the same extent as you would today ye know. A lot of fellas were let slip through that had potential and ah you were now at the mercy of good and bad managers so to speak. If a fella is good enough now he will get the few years and achieve close enough to his potential.

Int: Eventually then when you went down to Borris hurling, would there have been fierce inter-parish rivalries, would there have been hotly contested senses of identity between places?

Resp 7: Yeah, yeah, I suppose the Drom-Inch, even though we weren't in the mid Tipperary, but when we did eventually play Drom-Inch and they beat us in a match that knocked us out of the championship, there would have been a fierce sense of eh, eh, what would I say, well, there was a big sense of loss ye know in hindsight. And that'd never be forgotten and as it happened we had to be beaten by them to realise the extent of the feeling that was there and it was something that had been carried on from the old days, ye know. There obviously had been a bit of bad blood, eh, back the years and it resurrected itself in and around the time of the match. When Drom put that match across us all those old sores were opened up. But you know a bit of it was just healthy normal, ye know, craic but with a couple of individuals it went deeper than that and that's still there. There would actually be a few funnily enough who would have the same feelings for Templederry and I never got to the bottom of why, but I suppose it was just the fact that they were next door as well. There was a funny story about Paddy Fanning, he was walking up the street after a Borris/Templederry match and there was a row in that game. He was attacked by a Templederry woman with an umbrella and actually hospitalised.

Int: And just about the young lads that are playing today, do you think that they have the same sense of pride, same sense of pride of place that ye maybe had when ye were hurling?

Resp 7: Well I think, without a shadow of a doubt, they have an awful lot more. Mm, I don't know why it is but it is maybe going back to the schools or whatever but you know, to me they seem to get into a group and cheer together in a way that wasn't there long ago. Where we saw the followers from long ago were some of the old followers from the town, and the various goings on of them, Henz, Harty, they were fanatics in their own right. But you wouldn't see the ordinary people from the country loosing their heads so to speak, but the younger generation are different, they'd remind you what goes on at maybe soccer. When they are out supporting Borris, they are out for Borris, there's more cohesion about the support. I suppose people you know they tend to congregate in packs as well in the stand or where ever they are. In

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the past it was more diluted, you didn't get the same fanatical thing that's there today so I'd say they're very much more aware of place.

Int: About the actual physical boundaries between we'll say Borris and surrounding parishes - did the hurling make you aware that there was actually a physical boundary between you and another place?

Resp 7: Yeah, yes it did, it did. You'd hear about the famous fellas, ye know, if they were from just outside the boundary, you always feel that it's a pity they weren't. They were always judging whether they were inside or outside the thing. But going back to what you said about parishes. Now I mentioned Templeberry, we met them very infrequently but what tended to happen, whatever team was, Toomevara are on the ascendant there for a number of years now. Whatever team were the best became your bogey team, I mean we actually hated Kilruane at one stage, now there's no problem with Kilruane, they're no threat to us ye know. But I suppose going back to Drom, it wouldn't matter if Drom were number 14 junior, deep down we'd like to beat them, because we don't want them up the town slugging us ye know, that's different. Where as with Kilruane and those you're not as conscious, its not a big deal.

Int: The actual field itself below, would that have been a focal point for you growing up?

Resp 7: Well yeah, I suppose when I was a young lad our own back field was the field for the immediate area, the old Kiln field that's in the poem, lovely Fair Ileigh, that for me would have been sacred where hurling was concerned. Later on then when I got on the Borris team for the first time then, the field took on a meaning all right. You know I remember every hump and hollow in it and I remember when they did it up afterwards you know to me it was a kind of sacrilege ye know because we knew exactly what kind of a field we had. It was one of the best sods in the country. It wasn't very even but it was good enough for us but it was good enough for us kind of thing and probably afraid, and probably like all fields it took a while to come back to its own but its great now again. So yeah I suppose it wouldn't have been as important for me because it was two miles away and by the time you'd get there and back home it was too much hassle ye know, but at a later stage yeah, once you got out onto the field training with the boys - you were at home no doubt, yeah.

Int: Now just about outsiders coming in e.g. Tony Rabbitte, do you think the G.A.A. plays a role in them becoming part of the community?

Resp 7: Yeah, well what is certain anyway is that they are weighed up right away for their potential in that regard. Now the funny thing, say personally speaking, I would prefer when people would come in that the young lads would course in under-age and up along and be home grown in that sense. Where as I'd have had the feeling that much as you'd love to win county championships and everything else that if a fella came in and he was in his twenties and even-though he was very good, it was nearly too much of a good thing, you didn't feel that he wasn't from your parish. So when you went out you felt that you're parish wasn't being represented, that you were getting this extra help and the other crowd would say "yeah they won but they got extra help" and in our own case it only played a minor part, although Pat Kavannagh and Mick Cowen, they were great hurlers that we got. If it had been more than that if 2 or 3 had come in and made it I wouldn't have had the same satisfaction, it would have meant that much to me personally.

Int: Now do you think that it is important for their young lads to play for them to become part of the community?

Resp 7: Oh yeah, yeah. I'd be a great believer in new blood, I think people travel well. People who come in have to look at things in a different way. I mean it can be tough going for them to re-establish themselves in a new community but they bring a certain vigour ye know and mm they, well I think there'd be no resentment of their young lads because they start young enough that those young lads themselves consider themselves parishioners in any case if they were there any less than the age of 8 or 10 ye know. I think for the parents to bring and have their kids represent them at something they like and to make their mark in the new parish would give them a great feeling of putting down roots so to speak. And ye know make them feel that they are contributing for the good of the parish.

Int: Tell me a little bit about the cameo teams ye have available within the club?

Resp 3: Under 12, under 14, under 16 is not great with us. Last year now we did very well, we got to an under 12 county final, we won the under 14 county final, we won the junior B league final last year.

Int: Would there be any rivalries?

Resp 3: There is always terrible rivalry between ourselves and the Ballingary Gaels, the games get very rough.

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Int: And the neighbouring clubs, would ye often play Toomevara or Drom?

Resp 3: Just in challenges because Toomevara would be in a different league to us.

Int: Yeah the club isn't around all that long in Borris, and would the girls be like the hurlers in how serious they take it all?

Resp 3: Ah yes, some of them, mm, you would have maybe five or six who would take it as serious but some of them, you have a problem with the girls, you have a problem with them when they come to fourteen or fifteen. I always find that they just loose interest then.

Int: Now you would be involved with the young lads now and you would be going on about representing Borris, would it be the same with the girls?

Resp 3: It would yeah, it would once you get, no it wouldn't be really, the boys would give you a lot more. They have a lot more interest, I mean it would be a struggle for the girls to live up to that.

Int: And why would you say that is?

Resp; I don't know, as I said when girls come to fourteen or fifteen, I find it a problem here with them but when we were in Drom it wasn't a problem, and I think a lot of it is in the country clubs, you have a lot more interest in the country clubs than you do in the town, I think that it has a lot to do with the fact that there is more to do in a town. Here in Borrisoleigh you have the Ceoltas and the set dancing, they have also more whereas if you were out in a small country place like Drom, they have nothing else to do.

Int: How do the girls look at the hurlers or do they see themselves as being the same as them, would they support them and go off to the matches?

Resp 3: Oh yeah they would be very supportive, fellas wouldn't be as supportive now for the women. You don't get the same crowds for the camoige as for the hurling, without a doubt you don't.

Int; Is that a reason why they are not as interested in it?

Resp 3: I'd say it probably has an awful lot to do with it, but I think that because its fifteen a side it is better, you have more interest, without a doubt and then you can hold a game before a hurling match. Before as it was only twelve a side and you had to shorten the pitch and you had to do this and do that, whereas now if you want to play a match the pitch is the same as for the hurling.

Int: You know the way that you are involved now in the G.A.A. with both the camoige and the hurling, would there be much co-operation going on there between the clubs or are they both just two separate entities?

Resp 3: No, that's what I have found with Borrisoleigh, the senior club are brilliant, I have to give them credit for that. Tony Rabbitte, any time I rang him about the field, if there was something going on he arranged it that we'd have the field and dressing rooms and there was never a problem. The senior club was more than good to the camoige club and I have found that in this more than any other clubs.

Int: Would you say the camoige club will develop on to being something like Toomevara or Drom or is it just not there?

Resp 3: Mm I don't think it will develop on, because there aren't enough coming up really to keep it going and I said you will get them from 12 to 14, there is no problem, there are plenty of them down there, but after that its hard. Well I find it hard here I find it hard to get them down to training especially.

Int: Seeing as you are involved with the younger lads around, do you think that the youngsters coming up are fairly committed to the thing - the under 14s and around that age?

Resp 3: All they want to do is hurl. When we go down there, under 10s and under 12s are down there most nights for training, 14s maybe you would have 1 or 2 that wouldn't be as inclined to come, but the under 16s yeah I see them all coming down.

Int: So its going to continue on anyway?

Resp 3: Oh without a doubt, without a doubt.

Int: And do you get much help off the schools around?

Resp 3: Well, the girls school up here don't do camoige at all, the boys school, yeah, I have been up doing coaching with the boys this year.

Int: Will they not let ye into the girl's school?

Resp 3: Well nobody has ever tried, and I didn't ask and I suppose maybe I should have asked, I think they talked about starting to train camoige in the girls school next year.

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Int: Why do you play hurling?

Resp 2: I play hurling because I am from Co. Tipperary. My father and my grandfather played it and they all won medals with the Borrisoleigh. My grandfather played with Tipp. My father played with Tipp. All of the family played hurling and they all enjoyed it and were victorious at it.

Int: Do you think that it is very important as a youngster growing up in the community to play it so as to become part of the community?

Resp 2: It I think yeah, because especially at primary school level, we didn't do very much training or anything at primary school but when you were younger you always heard stories about the legends that played in Borrisoleigh teams and you hear about the great Borrisoleigh players. It makes you feel good that you are from a club that is so well known, they all say the great north club and whatever.

Int: Seeing as you are away now do you see hurling as a link to home for you apart from your family- that it is a link, does it help you when you are away?

Resp 2: Well myself, I go to college in Limerick, I find it great now if you are wearing a Borrisoleigh jersey or a Borrisoleigh shirt and people ask you what club you are from and you are able to say Borrisoleigh, and that your club has won an All-Ireland or so many county finals. Other people are from famous clubs and it's always great to be able to say that you are from a famous club in Tipperary. When you are away from home you like to have that bit of identity, so you can wear your colours and that type of thing.

Int: Do you think that it is very important for youngsters around to be involved in their club and to take that pride of place in their home place?

Resp 2: It is very important but at the moment you have other distractions, not to sound too old fashioned, but they can play soccer or they can play any other game but if they are involved with the hurling club they have a link with the older generation as well because the older generation only ever had hurling and gaelic and the G.A.A. and so it provides a link with the older generation. To be part of the club younger people don't only be playing the game but they can also be asked to go off and be umpires and referees or lines men or maybe they could go down and do the scoreboard for a game and this gives them a sense of helping out in the community and even if this isn't just for the club it gives them something else to be doing and it is great to be able to do it through the G.A.A. club.

Int: Getting back to something that you said there about the links with your father and stuff, do you think that for a lot of the lads around that it is a big thing that their father is from around Borris and that it is continuing on family traditions that were there?

Resp 2: Most people take pride in the tradition if their family has played the game and that, young people shouldn't feel obliged that they have to follow the tradition and that they have to play the game just because their parents did it. You often hear the older generation taking and asking will he play hurling and will he be as good as his father and this kind of thing, people enjoy that kind of thing, even if their father didn't play the game, they will always say will you make a hurler out of him and young people enjoy that.

Int: Now a question that is just on a completely personal thing because I know you fairly well, for the likes of people like Tony Rabbitte and John Keane to have only moved into a place, do you think that it is important for them that their young lads play to make them part of the parish, do you think that it is important in that way, or maybe its not important? Do you think that it provides a link for them with the parish that maybe wasn't there as a "blow-in"?

Resp 2: That's an opinion that often comes up, you often hear that, it's a kind of a bigot's, no not a bigot, you often hear that attitude among people but really its often jealousy or anything like that can breed these opinions. But the fact of the matter is there is no club that can be run by certain families, its rubbish talk. Tony Rabbitte, at the moment is chairman of the Borrisoleigh club, he has three sons that play hurling and they are all on the senior hurling team, on the senior hurling panel. Tony Rabbitte is a great chairman and he does a lot of good work for the club and you mentioned another man there John Keane senior, his son, yourself, plays hurling and Ciaran and Kevin have played for Borrisoleigh club and they have all won medals and John has played for Tipp. And they have contributed handsomely to the club. People will say that people like these who have only recently or in the last number of years become part of the parish, they say that they have no right to become part of our traditions or our colours or our backgrounds. That's only bigot talk that is. In this day and age these people are providing what the club needs to maintain its traditions.

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Int: About the hurling team itself - the actual space of the hurling field, I would just like to get your opinion about how important that is as a focal point, in the landscape of Borrisoleigh?

Resp 2: In Borrisoleigh we have the embarrassing situation where we don't have our own G.A.A. grounds, but having said that the park has always been considered the G.A.A. focal point and the area has always been maintained by the G.A.A. club. People have always wanted the best for the G.A.A. club and the park is named after a local parishioner and missionary Bishop Quinlan and it will always remain as a focal point for the town because in the evenings especially the summer evenings it is always a place for the people to go if they want something to do as there is always a match or training. It provides a social centre for the parish as a whole and the surrounding area, its just a pity that we don't have a field that we can call our own as it is only a town park, but having said that playing in the area itself is great especially for the younger people. When they are playing a match in Borrisoleigh and they can see all their relatives etc. coming down to watch them playing, it is unlike when they have to play away from home, when they don't have that support because the parents don't live in the village itself and they can get the support they need.

Int: Just getting back to the link with older generations, your opinion of what they think of us now, do you think that the G.A.A. is as important to us now as it was to past generations?

Resp.2: This is what has given the G.A.A. its negative points financially etc. people from outside the G.A.A. have the wrong opinions about the G.A.A. thinking its an association that robs people with tickets etc. etc. but having said that the G.A.A. especially in places like Borrisoleigh and surrounding parishes, its the social activity of the people. Now you mentioned the older generation and how they treat us in respect to the high regard that they have for the G.A.A. when they were younger etc. you often hear lads say that young people now have no respect for the club or that they don't have the same pride for the club as they used to have when they were growing up but having said that distractions in the older generations time were at an all time low - hurling was their life-blood. But even to day if anything happened even today whereby if a young person was in a situation where he couldn't play for his club or he couldn't be socially active with the club he would be entirely disappointed. Its really all we have in places like Borrisoleigh, we like to be part of the club, we like to play the game, we like to pull on the jersey, we love it because at the moment we are still pursuing our first medals in a long time and despite all the different opinions people have about the club with the older generations etc., everybody is built with the common goal of winning something because they want to be able to go to other parishes and say we're from Borrisoleigh, we're the county champions, we're the North champions. So I think that today people do have the same pride as was always had really, it is just overshadowed by other interests that people have growing up but that is only natural.

Int: Just one last question about parish rivalries that come out in the G.A.A., what's your opinion of the rivalries that go on and do you think that that reinforces your sense of being from Borrisoleigh?

Resp 2: It does and it doesn't, we'll say we have local rivalries with local clubs like Templederry, Drom-Inch and Toomevara we'll say. These are not so much famous clubs but we have grown up with the hope of the older generation about playing clubs like these. But I feel that a lot of local rivalries are built up by people's personal agendas really. Its great that rivalries can be mentioned in terms of hurling and in terms of great matches and great players great duels etc. but it is a pity sometimes when peoples personal agendas come to effect when you think of other clubs or other players and other people involved with other clubs. Its great to have the rivalry because it provides talk even at inter-county level, like Tipperary and Cork which goes back to the history of the G.A.A. memories, rivalries have always been fierce, tough but they were always fair, there was never any real bad grudges between the counties. In this day and age we have Tipperary and Clare, it often feels like this is forced for competitive reasons but it often provides more of a distraction to the hurling itself. At club level, I feel that it would be a pity for the whole aspect of love of rivalry to be thrown out the window because people love to talk about how much they would love to play in another double etc. It brings people together even more especially when they beat the local rivals, like Borrisoleigh trying to beat Toomevara who are the county champions and if they beat them it will be a tremendous occasion. This is not so much because we have won anything but that we have overcome the old foe. We will have beaten people who live in houses only a hundred yards away.

Int: Do you think that the G.A.A. and being part of it reinforces the borders around parishes and reinforces the fact that you are from a certain area?

Resp. 2: It does yeah, because you often have the situation where players are caught in the dispute over where they are from i.e. Borrisoleigh or Templederry etc. should he/she be playing with one club or

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another. People take this personally, in that they want the person to be part of their club and that person may also want to be part of that club. People believe that if a person belongs to a club that no other club has the right to claim him etc. This is true especially around Borrisoleigh where we have so many bordering clubs, everybody loves to be able to say I am from Borrisoleigh and I am very much a Borrisoleigh man and people take great pride in that in saying that they are close to living in another parish but they are from Borrisoleigh etc.

Int: Could you tell me the main reasons why you started playing hurling when you were a young lad?

Resp 6: Well it was the thing all of us did in school, there were sixteen boys in my class and we all played hurling, everyone of us had an interest and we were all reared on stories that our parents and neighbours told us about great Borrisoleigh hurling teams of the past and I suppose everybody wanted to be like them and then we went down training a few times. We had a great trainer when we were young - Mark Rabbitte, and he used to inspire us with tales of people who wore the jersey and he saw it as a great thing to wear the Borrisoleigh jersey and everyone of us wanted to be like that and we would spend hours practicing and I suppose we all enjoyed hurling as well. It was great fun and with Borrisoleigh and Tipp. Senior hurlers we had great inspiration to play it as well.

Int: Now that you are away in college and all, does it mean a lot to be still hurling for Borris ?

Resp 6: It means everything, it's the topic of conversation with other fellas down there and you would be surprised how many fellas down there play hurling at the moment. It means a lot to me to be a Borris man among the others. It's a special identity that we have, we'll say there are 2 or 3 of us down there. We bring our maroon and white Borris jerseys down there to training and we can tell them about our All-Ireland club finals and be proud of them, and I find the same from other people, they are all proud of the club they come from but I feel especially honoured to carry the name of Borrisoleigh and to be on the team and to tell other people about that.

Int: The fact that you are from Pallas Cross, do you think that that's a big factor when you go in to play with Borris?

Resp 6: I do because every family in Borrisoleigh has some kind of hurling tradition but I'd be very proud of the Pallas Cross tradition because my father and two uncles played for Borris and my grand father won medals for Borris in junior hurling. It's a great thing to have passed onto you and they would all encourage you around Pallas Cross, it is a great hurling area and the boys around there who I am great friends with all play hurling as well. It is a fierce hurling area any way, it is what is talked about out in the local shop and every time you talk to some one hurling eventually comes up in the conversation.

Int: Do you think that being part of the hurling club makes you more part of the community in Borrisoleigh?

Resp 6: I do, most people in Borrisoleigh are part of the hurling club and it's a place where you get to meet other people, it's a social meeting place, you talk and you do work together. It helps the younger lads in the community to feel part of something, and of course on a match day the entire parish comes out to watch the team. Its great craic out if the team wins, when you go to the pub afterwards. I feel that the local hurling club is a big part of the community.

Int: Do you think that the rivalry that exists your reinforces identity with Borrisoleigh - as being a Borrisoleigh man?

Resp 6: Definitely yes, I know fierce well that Borrisoleigh is a parish with lots of neighbours and there is fierce rivalry with the likes of Templederry, Drum-inch, Toomevara and all of these teams. If you are playing against another team, then naturally you will want to win so a rivalry grows, and whichever team wins might rub it into the other team and the next time they play the other team will remember how humiliated they were when they lost, put in a great effort and try to win and the rivalry grows then of course. You read about it in the paper and Borrisoleigh and Drum-inch have particular rivalry because they are such close neighbours and they talk about it together and each parish wants to talk about the pride of having won the game. I believe it is a fierce contribution to local rivalries.

Int: And this sense of community identity, would you say the G.A.A. plays a major role in that?

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Resp 6: I think that even with the colours of Borrisoleigh hurling team, the community can identify with the colours maroon and white, we are very proud of it and the G.A.A. plays a big role because with competition and all of that, there is fierce rivalry there. You want your own parish team to win, you will go along and support them, and you will talk about it afterwards in the pub. You have your own special identity, I am a Borrisoleigh man and that gives me the right to celebrate and you can say to neighbouring parish people that "our" team won - it is "our" team that won and not some body elses. The maroon and white of Borrisoleigh, it is our jersey and not someone elses. You feel like you belong to the club, you are a part of it and you are especially happy then when your G.A.A. club wins, where as if you hear somebody elses club has won it doesn't mean that much to you.

Int: With the people that have come in from outside, do you think that for eg. John Keane senior and Tony Rabbitte, do you think that for them that it was vital to get involved in the G.A.A. club and for their sons to also get involved in order to become part of the community?

Resp 6: I think that there is no way that so many people would have got to know Tony Rabbitte if it hadn't been for his huge interest in hurling and the same goes for John Keane. They came in and they had a job and knew who they were working for but how did they get to know the rest of the parish, as they are both so well known now, it was obviously through hurling, as they have a fierce interest in it now and they have produced hurlers who are playing senior for Borrisoleigh senior team at the moment. It is a topic of conversation for them and that is how they got to know so many people. It seems that it was vital for them that they got involved in Borrisoleigh hurling as this created links between them and the other people, it was something to talk about and do together.

Int: And just about the actual field itself, would you see that as being a focal point in your childhood and a focal point for Borrisoleigh area itself?

Resp 6: You have your normal life at home in what ever you do - you are eating your dinner and you are working and going to school, but then it is the place where everybody meets up maybe 2 or 3 nights a week, you will always look forward to going off to hurling training and meeting all your friends and having a good time down there and afterwards in the dressing room having a chat about what is after going on during the week. It is definitely a focal point. When tickets come out for matches the whole crowd goes down and there is great banter over who they think is going to win and all of this. Whenever a match is on in the park, the entire parish is down watching it and supporting the local team, or even just getting the field ready if the local team isn't playing. So the local field definitely plays a big role in social development around the town.

Int: And just back to the rivalries again, do you think that they are fairly bitter and that senses of place are highly contested?

Resp 6: Well in the G.A.A. I definitely think that senses of place are highly contested and this is very obvious in the Tipp. Clare rivalry that is on at the moment, it is very bitter and it is reflected on the field and in the stands, during the match you can hear the supporters hackling at each other and laughing. I don't think club rivalry gets as fierce because it is not on a national scale and the media aren't blowing it out of proportion, but definitely neighbours can say things, for eg. If one neighbour laughs at another if they give a team a bigger trouncing and then he thinks about him laughing at him and they want to train harder and give them a beating the next time and this is where the rivalries begin, as a team always wants to be on top and the sense of competition leads to this rivalry and then of course you will have your couple of fools who take things over board to the next level. Generally I think that there is a healthy rivalry in the G.A.A., it often gets bitter but I would be kind of friendly with most of the other parishes but I always still have a very keen interest to try and beat them.

Int: And just as regards to yourself and your peers, would ye feel that ye have something to live up to and that your sense of identity with Borris and your will to want to be from Borris is as strong as past exponents of the game?

Resp. 6: Yes, you are born in Borris, then you go to national school there but then there is more, when you hear the stories you take it in yourself, you hear a story about how Noel Dwyer scored so many points in a match and Liam Devaney won man of the match in an All-Ireland final and you can see these people every day and you know that there is something special about them because they were great hurlers and you have heard about Christy Ring etc. but it is amazing that you have someone in your own parish that you can actually see and relate with and talk to and who has done what Christy Ring has done. I think when somebody talks about hurling that they carry a certain magic about them, when they talk about a

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certain player and something brilliant that he did and you want to be a part of this magic. So we want to be the next, we want to play at senior level and then maybe represent our county in the blue and gold, but I'd be very happy just to play for Borris, I think it's the greatest honour to put on that jersey because it has done so much pride for the parish. People all love the maroon and white jersey, its brought six county finals and I hope a lot more.

Int: Do you think that hurling makes you more aware of the boundary between you and the next parish?

Resp 6: Hurling is definitely the place where I most see a boundary, if you meet lads off the field you are just two ordinary people talking but when you meet them on the field there is a special rivalry, they are from one parish and you are from another, the winner takes all and gets to enjoy the big dream and hold their head up high. If you lose you are down in the dumps and you cant really look the other fella in the eye, you have to win or else you will not be able to go back home and listen to your parents talk about my son and he had a great day today and we beat the other crowd. Your parish doesn't have the honour of winning the match and bringing home the trophy in the end and then there is the obvious hackling that goes on "oh Borrisloeigh are a shower of cowards", but then of course Borris people would say this back to other losers. It definitely makes me aware that Borrisloeigh are there and they are another part of the country. There is a big border there and I wouldn't want to play for any other club. I couldn't transfer away from Borris even if I wasn't living there because it wouldn't feel right, I wouldn't feel half as proud or anything, I wouldn't really even like the jersey or I wouldn't have any empathy with them.

